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THE BIBLE AND BUSINESS

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TO THE

BROTHERHOOD CLASS

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HIGHLAND PARK METHODIST CHURCH

(DALLAS)

THIS LITTLE BOOK

IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
DEC 29 1952

PREFACE

We continue to profess that the Bible is our guide in all matters of faith and practice, but the points in practice of most concern to many practical men of our day are largely ignored in books on the Old and New Testaments. In our commercial civilization, a failure to point out the bearing, if any, of the Bible upon economic problems confronting Christians leaves most men with little choice between regarding the Book as a magic manual hiding mysteries from all but favored initiates, and looking upon it as a collection of pious but obsolete treatises about theology. The purpose of this little study is to answer briefly, but as accurately as possible in the light of modern knowledge, the question: What has the Bible to say about business?

No one recognizes more than the writer his lack of qualification for this work, but such tasks are usually left to middle-men. In learning, as in business, there is a lamentable gulf between the producer and the consumer. Better organization may lessen the necessity for go-betweens, but for the present there must be distributors as well as manufacturers. This is not to say that the present volume is a mere compilation. Students will recognize the author's indebtedness to a host of scholars: Driver,

Jastrow, J. M. P. Smith, Sir George Adam Smith, Soares, Schürer, Moulton, Deissmann, and many others who are not named in the few footnotes. But a first hand study of the Bible itself, in the light of contemporary social and economic history, is the primary basis of the work. Written for the general reader, it is hoped that the study is reasonably sound from the viewpoint of conservative scholarship.

If the writer has avoided obvious blunders in dealing with the Old Testament, he has to thank Professor John H. Hicks of the School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, who has patiently read the chapters dealing with the Old Testament and has given much kindly criticism.

In quotations from the Old and New Testament, the American Standard Version (Thomas Nelson & Sons) has been used, except where direct reference has been made to translations from Moffatt or from *The Old Testament: An American Translation* (Chicago, 1927). Quotations from the Apocrypha are from the Revised Version (English).

U. L.

Southern Methodist University.

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CHRONOLOGY OF HEBREW HISTORY

Exodus from Egypt, about 1200 B.C.

Entry into Canaan, about 1160 B.C.

United Kingdom under Saul, David and Solomon, 1040-933 B.C.

Kingdom of Northern Israel, 933-722 B.C.

Kingdom of Judah, 933-586 B.C.

Babylonian Exile, 586-516 B.C.

Persian Rule, 538-332 B.C.

Greek Rule, 322-175 B.C.

Independence in Maccabean age, 175-63 B.C.

Roman Rule, 63 B.C.-fourth century A.D. Jerusalem fell 70 A.D.

CHAPTER I

BUSINESS IN THE BIBLE

The Bible and Business

CHAPTER I

BUSINESS IN THE BIBLE

"And Sarah died in the land of Canaan. . . . And Abraham rose up from before his dead, and spake unto the children of Heth, saying, I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a burying-place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight" (Gen. 23:2-4). Thus begins a story of ancient trade which is at once old and new. The methods of buying and selling and the legal forms are of a world which seems very far away, although it survives in part in Arabia to-day. The occasion of the transaction and the attitudes of seller and buyer are as modern as this morning's newspaper.

Bent under the sorrow of Sarah's death, Abraham was not disposed to haggle over price. As is often true, the mourner is generous in the face of his dead; and, as is also common, the sorrowing are easy prey for unscrupulous traders. The demand of Abraham for possession in perpetuity of the grave where he was to lay his wife reveals the world-old care of the living for the dead. In a word, the motives are the motives of men everywhere and at all times.

The methods of barter, strange to the West, still persist in the East. With respectful manner Abraham proclaimed himself a stranger asking for a tomb for his dead. The ready offer of the men of the town to provide anywhere such a burying-place was swept aside by a courteous refusal. Perhaps, they hesitated to sell their land to a stranger, but it is more likely that the offer was only a part of the preliminary bargaining. "Just so," wrote a traveler in Palestine, "I have had houses and fields and horses given to me, and the by-standers called upon to witness the deed, and a score of protestations and oaths taken to seal the truth of the donation; all which I knew meant nothing whatever, just as Abraham understood the true intent and value of Ephron's bakhshish." [1]

In the same way, Ephron's offer of the cave and the field, when Abraham had at last made known what particular property he desired, was taken at its face value: that is, for mere courtesy. One can almost see the shrug with which Ephron said: ". . . a piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver, what is that betwixt me and thee?" At this distance, we have no means of determining the actual value of the land, but it is safe to suppose that a good price was being put upon this property so desired by the princely stranger. At any rate, Abraham took

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[1] W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book* (Lond. and N. Y., c. 1880), vol. i, p. 247.

the offer before Ephron could change his mind; and the money was weighed out.

The legal forms are of the old world. The whole transaction is oral, and the preliminaries carried on through an intermediary. "Entreat for me," says Abraham to the assembled elders and kinsmen, "to Ephron, the son of Zohar, that he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he hath, which is in the end of his field, for the full price let him give it to me . . ." (23:8-10). Only then did the owner, Ephron, speak directly to the buyer. The sale was also consummated in the presence of witnesses; before them the exact boundaries of the purchase were determined and the money weighed out.

The forms are old, but even here the essentials are those observed in similar transactions to-day. The sale is witnessed and made of public record; the paying of the purchase price is likewise attested in the presence of the elders; the boundaries of the field are established; and the conveyor guarantees the title to the buyer—"So the field of Ephron . . . and the cave . . . were made sure unto Abraham for a possession . . ." (23:17-18). Even across these centuries we recognize the fundamentals of man's trading with his fellows.

If one would realize the long period which is covered by the Bible, it would be well to compare the ancient forms of Abraham's purchase of the cave of Machpelah with some of the stories of Jesus. In the former, the transaction is oral, carried on in the presence of the elders at the gate of an Arabian

"city." If we turn to one of the parables of Jesus, we find the methods of an advanced commercial civilization. The buying and selling of Arabian chiefs with their quaint, although fundamentally sound legal procedure, have given way to the financial arts of a sophisticated people.

A man going into another country called his servants and delivered his money into their hands. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one. The first traded with his money and gained one hundred per cent on his investment. The second did likewise; but the third "digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money." When "after a long time," a reckoning was called for, the two clever traders were commended; but the fearful servant was severely punished. "Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the bankers," cried the lord, "and at my coming I should have received back mine own with interest" (Matt. 25:14-30).

Here we move in another world than that of Abraham and the children of Heth. Banking and credit have come into existence. There are enterprises where a shrewd trader can hope for large returns on his money. A whole system of finance in the Mediterranean world of the first century A.D. is condensed into this short parable; and there is reflected also a social system where wealthy men turned over their business to intelligent slaves.

Between these two illustrations of business in the Bible there are almost numberless discussions and references to man's perennial attempt to make a

living, to prosper and to exchange his own goods for his neighbors' possessions. It seems strange that in all our study of the Bible we should pay so little attention to this fundamental human problem which appears so often in its pages, and that we should so seldom ask what the Bible has to tell us of the historic relations of morality and religion to business.

If we think for a moment that the stories which have been quoted are unique, that the rest of the book is taken up with theological controversies or dry disquisitions on peccadilloes, we have only to turn the pages. There are descriptions of building operations; arguments about taxation; advice as to endorsing notes; laws about personal and property damage; both teaching and legislation concerning interest; references to shipping, mining, arts and crafts, professions; humorous descriptions of trading; accounts of labor disputes; and so on through the whole gamut of human beings' struggles for food and for money.

Some of the best stories of the Old Testament have to do with trading. In addition to such a description as that of Abraham's dealing with the sons of Heth, we have, for example, the romance of Joseph, so often called the perfect short story. The sale of Joseph by his brethren to the Midianite caravan is, as we shall see, an instructive instance of ancient trading (Gen. 37:25-29). In Egypt, Joseph organized a grain monopoly for the king, which was provision against famine but doubtless also served well the royal coffers (Gen. 41:25-57). The tricks

which Joseph played on his brothers when they came to Egypt to buy corn in the time of famine were perhaps typical of the kind of dishonesty to which strangers were subject.

The prophets ring with denunciations of dishonesty and greed. Unhallowed riches, greed, theft, bribery and foreclosures are part of the evils portrayed in their flaming pages. "Forasmuch therefore as ye trample upon the poor, and take exactions from him of wheat: ye have built houses of stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink the wine thereof" (Amos 5:11). "And they covet fields, and seize them; and houses, and take them away: and they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage" (Micah 2:2). "The women of my people ye cast out from their pleasant houses; from their young children ye take away my glory forever" (2:9).

No less concerned with business was Hebrew legislation. Scattering illustrations will show the nature of this interest. Workmen were to be paid speedily (Lev. 19:13); under certain circumstances, interest and profits were restricted (Lev. 25:35-36); land markers were protected (Deut. 19:14); building codes required safety devices (Deut. 22:8); a simple method of bankruptcy was provided (Deut. 15:1-6).

The sages, whose wisdom is preserved in such books as Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and in scattered sayings recorded elsewhere, were given to practical

advice as to man's business relations. Along with wholesome admonition as to true balances and weights (Proverbs 11:1), there was much homely counsel, such as warnings against endorsing notes (Proverbs 6:1-5) and advice on profitable farming (Proverbs 27:23-27).

In the New Testament, there are references to the simple builders of Nazareth, who knew how to lay a sure foundation (Matt. 7:24-27), and to men whose wealth was in kind, who must needs build greater barns to house the produce of their fields (Luke 12:16-21). In the parables of Jesus there is a veritable procession of contemporary trade: the pearl-merchants and the sellers of sparrows, fishermen and the managers of estates. In the Gospels, Jesus is asked to divide property, to decide questions of taxation; he is confronted with cheating in the Temple courts; and a tax-farmer proposes a method of making good his unjust exactions.

In an unexpected place, the Book of Revelation, one finds a detailed description of business in a Mediterranean city. "Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! for in one hour is thy judgment come. And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, for no man buyeth their merchandise any more; merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and pearls, and fine linen, and purple and silk, and scarlet; and all thyine wood, and every vessel of ivory, and every vessel made of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble; and cinnamon, and spice, and incense,

and ointment, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and cattle, and sheep; and merchandise of horses and chariots and slaves; and souls of men. . . . Woe, woe, the great city, wherein all that had their ships in the sea were made rich by reason of her costliness . . . and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft, shall be found any more at all in thee; and the voice of a mill shall be heard no more at all in thee" (Rev. 18:10-22).

Even the great religious ideas of the Bible are often expressed in words borrowed from business. The debt is sometimes greater than for the mere lending of a word, for fundamental conceptions of God and his relations to men are derived from the world of trade.

It has long been a commonplace that the Hebrews advanced beyond their neighbors in the conception of man's relation to God. Whereas other peoples held to the notion of a god committed, by kinship or otherwise, to one people without exception as to their character or conduct, the Hebrews thought of themselves as in covenant with God; if they did well, God would be their God. This idea of covenant, or contract, is expressed, sometimes crudely, sometimes with sophistication; but it underlay the theology of the Old Testament.

Jacob, a boy who had tricked his elder brother, drove a bargain with the Almighty: "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace,

and Jehovah will be my God, then this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee" (Gen. 28:20-21). The suavity with which Jacob asked Jehovah for ninety per cent perhaps sets a record in the history of business, but his underlying conception, that of contract, is also epochal in theology.

In the minds of the great prophets, the idea of contract became a nobler conception. No more stirring calls came from prophetic lips than appeals to Israel to keep their contract: "Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel: Cursed be the man that heareth not the words of this covenant, which I commanded your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the iron furnace, saying, Obey my voice, and do them according to all which I command you: so shall ye be my people, and I will be your God" (Jeremiah 11:3-4).

Not only in the Old Testament did business contribute to religion, but in the New Testament as well. In the Lord's Prayer itself we are taught to say: "forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matt. 6:12). And we shall see that some of Paul's greatest descriptions of the meaning of Christ and of salvation are in terms borrowed from contemporary business.[2]

With so much in the Bible concerning business, we can hope to find some hints as to the relation of

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[2] See Chapter X.

religion and morality with this great phase of man's social activity. What was the attitude of the great teachers of Israel and of Jesus and his followers toward business? Were they aware of the importance of man's economic life? Did they understand its dangers? Do they give us any principles for relating man's economic life to his intellectual and spiritual needs? If so, have these principles any value to-day?

Such are the questions for which we should like to find answers, and even in as brief a study as is possible here, we may find some hints toward the answers we seek. Our first task, then, will be to sketch the history of business in the Old Testament, and, in the light of that history, to study the attitudes of prophets, lawmakers and wise-men toward Hebrew business life. After this, we shall be prepared to learn something of business in New Testament times and of the relations toward it of Jesus and the early Christians. Finally, we shall ask whether our study has any meaning for our day.

CHAPTER II

ANCIENT ISRAEL

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ANCIENT ISRAEL

After Joseph, sent by his father to see how the other sons fared at Dothan, had been seized by these brethren and cast into a pit, the miscreants sat down to their meal to discuss the disposal of their father's favorite. "But raising their eyes, they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with their camels carrying gum, balm, and laudanum, which they were engaged in taking down to Egypt . . . so pulling Joseph up, they lifted him out of the pit; they sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver" (Gen. 37:25-28—*An American Translation*).

Here we have a fair example of the ancient traffic of Palestine: all the elements, the trade-route, the caravan, the merchants, the portable goods and the use of money, are illustrated in this story. If the reader will glance at a map of Palestine, he will see that Dothan lies in a little valley between the coast land and the famous Plain of Esdraelon. Up this valley went one of the most frequented trade-routes between Gilead, Damascus and the East, and Egypt and the South. Palestine itself lay between the great civilizations of the ancient world. To the North and East were Syria, Babylonia, Assyria and the great East. To the South were Arabia and Egypt. The

little strip of country that we call Palestine was a natural bridge lying between the Desert to the East and the Mediterranean Sea to the West, so that land communication between the ancient Powers was through the territory held at one time or another by the Hebrews and neighboring peoples. This is the physical explanation of the Jews' commercial interest: they were on the highway of the world's trade.

Carrying on camel-back or mule-back the wares that might be sold in Egypt, traders moved slowly across the desert, down the sea-coast, or along the eastern bank of the Jordan; or they traveled north to sell the products of Arabia, Egypt, or even what had come by boat across the Indian Ocean and up the Red Sea from India. The caravan which the brethren of Joseph hailed was carrying spices wanted in Egypt for embalming; but they were glad to pick up Syrian slaves, who were much prized in the ancient world. The caravans moved only a few miles each day, and each evening at their camp they would be ready for such local trade as their own or their camels' needs or their cupidity might direct.

Some scholars have thought that in this caravan trade we have the explanation of the Jews' later commercial characteristics. The neglect of arts and crafts and the fondness of the Jew for "middle-man" trading, the work of the broker and the retailer, have been attributed to the position of Palestine, where manufactured goods could be had from passing caravans with too much ease to encourage native industry. Palestine's fertile valleys, which produced fruits,

olives, and grapes and therefrom wine and oil and raisins; grain for bread, and grass for flocks of sheep made it easy for the Hebrew to provide exports that could be traded for the handiwork of more industrialized peoples. Ordinary wants were supplied within the household circle (cf. Prov. 31). Only the necessary trades, such as that of the potter and of the common builder, seem to have been carried on.

The mention of money in the earliest accounts suggests that caravan trade accustomed the Hebrews from the first to the use of coin. Much trade was always by barter, of course; but money was introduced into Palestine much earlier than it would have been except for international communication.

When the Hebrews came into Palestine, they found a land already well developed agriculturally and accustomed to considerable commerce. At the fall of Jericho one man found and appropriated "a goodly Babylonish mantle, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight" (Joshua 7:21). Long before the coming of the Hebrews the Phoenicians on the sea-coast had developed a Mediterranean trade; and in the period of the Hebrew kingdoms, Tyre rose to world importance as a home of merchant princes (cf. Ezekiel 27).

Once in Palestine the Hebrews yet had a long way to go before they really occupied the land. The so-called "Conquest" was gradual; the Israelites were confined to the hills, and the Philistines occupied the coastal plain and most of the great trade-routes.

Indeed, the Israelites never became a sea-faring people. There were no harbors along the shore from Mt. Carmel southward to Egypt, and enemies were in the way if there had been ports. For the most part the Mediterranean appears only in Israelitish literature, not in their every-day life. In the Old Testament, "the sea spreads before us for spectacle, for symbol, for music, for promise, but never for use—save (in one case) where a prophet sought it as an escape from his God." [1]

Confined to the hills, the Israelitish tribes were unable to take part in the trade which passed along the valleys and was yet in the hands of enemies. We find little mention of trade, therefore, in the book of Judges. There are, however, some indications that the Hebrews, as they settled to an agricultural life, tried to get at the great trade-routes. Some of the battles described in Judges were fought in strategic locations on these great highways of commerce. In the Plain of Esdraelon, the real passage-way from Syria to Egypt, Barak and Deborah won their great battle over Sisera (Judges 4). Where the Jordan flows into the Dead Sea, near one of the routes from the desert of Arabia, Ehud, the left-handed Benjamite, led the Israelites to victory over the Moabites (Judges 3:15 ff). It was over Ishmaelite traders that Gideon won his battle described in the eighth chapter of Judges, and the spoil taken from the

[1] Sir George Adam Smith: *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land.* Seventeenth edition. (New York and London, n. d.), pp. 131-2.

conquered consisted of golden earrings, a common medium of exchange.

With the establishment of the monarchy under Saul and David, we come to a period of developing commerce. In Western Asia, kings concerned themselves in trade and were themselves often the principal merchants. Much that is called tribute in ancient writings turns out upon examination to be trade. The very fact, therefore, that Israel established a kingdom suggests that conditions were growing more favorable for participating in the caravan-trade which passed continuously through the valleys of Palestine.

The stories of I and II Samuel which depict David's wars with the Philistines, the Moabites, the Ammonites and the Edomites are also of importance in the history of Israelitish commerce. The Philistines occupied the cities and the trade-routes toward the coast, while other peoples were settled across the routes from the south-east. David's victories opened these routes to the Hebrews, and a part of the lucrative trade with passing caravans might now be enjoyed by the tribesmen heretofore confined to the hills.

More definite evidence is found in the fact that David established standard weights, which would, of course, be used in commerce. Reference to this is found, curiously enough, in the statement that Absalom's hair when cut off weighed two hundred shekels "after the king's weight" (II Sam. 14:26). David also made alliance with Hiram, king of the

great merchant-city, Tyre; and Hiram "sent messengers to David, and cedar-trees, and carpenters, and masons; and they built David a house" (II Sam. 5:11).

But it is with Solomon that the glory of Israel as a trading-people began; in fact, it was in these years that Israel as a nation made her greatest bid for international importance in political and commercial circles. Although the biblical writers were not primarily concerned with economic history, we can yet piece together much information of value in reconstructing the trade of the monarchy. The dating is not always exact, but the general facts are fairly certain.

Solomon inherited a kingdom which stretched from the Euphrates to the Red Sea, and if it shrunk somewhat during his reign, it yet commanded most of the great trade-routes. A part of the wealth with which the king is credited is ascribed to duties levied on trade (I Kings 10:15). The accounts of Solomon's expeditions and contacts with the outside world are yet the subject of debate among scholars, but they may be taken to illustrate the wide extent of his commercial interests. David had conquered Jerusalem, and the royal city was a center of trade despite the fact that it was off the main routes of commerce. Here Solomon enterprised a great building program, and Hiram, King of Tyre, furnished cedar and fir in return for wheat and oil (I Kings 5:10-11). Solomon also had Hiram build for him "a navy of ships" near an arm of the Red Sea, and

these brought him cargoes said to have been worth ten millions of dollars. Together with Hiram, Solomon is said to have had a navy "of Tarshish" (Spain), which brought, once every three years, a cargo of "gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks" (I Kings 10:22). The story of the Queen of Sheba's visit to Solomon may also be taken as referring to the king's trade with the South. The Queen is reported to have brought to Solomon "a hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices very great store, and precious stones" (I Kings 10:10).

Solomon's wealth and empire were maintained, however, at the cost of forced labor from the people. Of the levy which wrought among the cedars of Lebanon, we read: "And he sent them to Lebanon, ten thousand a month by courses; a month they were in Lebanon, and two months at home" (I Kings 5:14). True, it is added later that Solomon did not make bondservants of the children of Israel (I Kings 9:22); but it seems evident that Israelites were compelled to work in the levy of laborers. The prophecy put in Samuel's mouth before the selection of Saul as king doubtless represents very truly the evils which arose under the great monarchy. The king, said Samuel, "will take your sons, and appoint them unto him, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and they shall run before his chariots . . . and he will set some to plow his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and the instruments of his chariots. And he will take your daughters to be perfumers, and to be cooks,

and to be bakers. And he will take your men-servants, and your maid-servants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work" (I Sam. 8:11-16). When Solomon's kingdom was disrupted after his death, the leader was a man who had been in charge of one of the great king's labor gangs (I Kings 11:28).

Attacks from Syria, internal rebellion and general dissatisfaction brought on the division in Israel. The northern part went back to form itself again into a separate kingdom and after a while established a capital at Samaria; the southern continued as the Kingdom of Judah with the capitol at Jerusalem. Sometimes at peace, sometimes at war, the two kingdoms went their ways until Israel was at last captured by Assyria in 722 B.C. and Judah fell before Babylon's armies in 586 B.C.

Continued interest in trade on the part of the two kingdoms may be illustrated by the reign of Ahab, King of Israel (876-854 B.C.). In spite of his bad reputation because of conflicts with Elijah, Ahab must be credited with real material accomplishments. His marriage to Jezebel was in fact an alliance with the important commercial power of Sidon. After defeating the Syrians, Ahab made an advantageous treaty with them, which provided for Israelitish markets in Damascus (I Kings 20:34). Peace between Ahab and Jehoshaphat, King of Judah, gave both kingdoms a chance to pursue commercial projects which once again gave the Hebrews a place in the ancient economic world.

Nevertheless, the glories of the Solomonic era never returned. Efforts to regain the sea-traffic came to nothing, the vessels being wrecked in the Red Sea (I Kings 22:48). But Israel and Judah were still on the great trade-routes. Ezekiel mentions them as dealing with Tyre, exchanging for the imports of the city "at the entry of the sea," "wheat from Minnith, honey, oil, and balsam" (Ezekiel 27:17—*An American Translation*). Hosea calls Israel a "trafficker"—"Canaanite" is his word (12:7); and in Isaiah we have numerous references to the commerce of the southern kingdom. Judah is guilty of striking hands (i. e. having dealings with) "the children of foreigners"; "And their land is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures" (Isaiah 2:6-7).

The evidence points to an increase of trade in the second half of the eighth century B.C. The reason is probably that Assyria, advancing in power, occupied the attention of the more powerful enemies of Israel and Judah, who were therefore able to regain control of routes and trading stations which had been lost in previous reigns. At any rate, it is with conditions during the latter eighth and the seventh centuries that we are more conversant through the writings of the prophets.

Amos at Bethel, the great shrine of the Northern Kingdom, attacked the vices of Israel, among them those connected with trade. The stern prophet pictures the worshipers as saying: "When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell grain? and the

sabbath, that we may set forth wheat?" (Amos 8:5). But why discuss these matters at a sanctuary such as Bethel? Is it simply the preacher's disregard for time and place? An answer involves the fact common throughout the ancient East, that sanctuaries were also the seat of fairs where goods were bought and sold. Amos himself was probably a seller of wool and fruit which was ground into meal as well as a shepherd, and his trips to Bethel may have been by way of business.

A modern traveler's description of a Syrian bazaar may help us to visualize the scene as Amos saw it. "Lemons and oranges, pomegranates and quinces, apples and apricots, and all kinds of fruits and vegetables, in their season, which these extensive gardens produce, are here exposed for sale. The fellahin, also, from the villages bring their sheep and goats, their lambs and kids, their cows and calves, their milk and butter and cheese, their poultry and eggs, their figs and olives, and every other kind of fruit, fresh or dry, which they possess; in baskets or round trays or small earthen jugs, in jars or large skin-bottles, on camels or mules, or horse or donkey, on the heads of men or boys, women or girls, are brought and set down here to be sold." [2]

In smaller places these bazaars would contain only native products, and trade would be largely by barter. But at the larger sanctuaries there would be a

[2] William M. Thomson: *The Land and the Book*, vol. i, p. 25.

certain amount of commerce with traders from afar. Particularly in the cities would this be necessary since the products of the inhabitants and their adjacent lands would be insufficient to take care of the needs of numbers of priests and royal officers, who were large consumers but who produced nothing.

Sir George Adam Smith, in his great work on Jerusalem, has studied carefully the needs of that city for wheat, dried and salt fish, salt, animals for food, riding and draught animals, metals, such as gold, silver and iron, spices, wool and flax. These, he concludes, must have been imports. The more that Jerusalem increased in political and religious importance, the more there was need for trade with the outside world. On the other hand, the city's political and religious importance doubtless reflects the growth of commerce.

In the prophetic books, we have first-hand evidence of the increase of imports, especially of luxuries. The rich of Israel had summer and winter houses and beds of ivory, while instruments of music and oils for anointing are mentioned as prized luxuries (Amos 3:15; 6:4-5). In Isaiah, we have a picture of the wardrobe of a fashionable woman, which suggests what would be in demand from the bazaars: he lists their "anklets, and the cauls, and the crescents; the pendants, and the bracelets, and the mufflers; the headtires, and the ankle chains, and the sashes, and the perfume-boxes, and the amulets; the rings, and the nose-jewels; the festival robes, and the mantles,

and the shawls, and the satchels; the hand-mirrors, and the fine linen, and the turbans, and the veils" (Isaiah 3:18-23).

The means with which to purchase the staples and luxuries of Jerusalem are listed by Sir George Adam Smith as (1) the surplus of oil; (2) the sale of manufactured articles, which, while never large, may have been sufficient for the ordinary use of the inhabitants of the city and of the surrounding villages; (3) the profit from trade with other countries; (4) royal revenues; and (5) the Temple revenues.[3]

All that concerns us at present is the income derived from commerce. Although Jerusalem was off the main lines of trade, yet Eastern kings when they built a city required merchants to bring their caravans to it; and, since the king himself usually kept international trade in his own hands, no small part of the country's traffic with other peoples would come directly or indirectly to the capitol. In addition, royal tolls and duties would swell the coffers at Jerusalem. There seems to be little direct evidence that the priests of Judah, like other Eastern Asiatic priests, participated directly in the trade of the kingdom; but the presence of fairs at the sanctuaries would mean much indirectly to the priestly class (But cf. Hosea 4:8; 6:9).

If we stop now and ask for details of the business whose history to the time of the Exile has been

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[3] G. A. Smith: *Jerusalem: the Topography, Economics and History from the Earliest Times to A.D. 70* (New York, 1908), vol. i, pp. 335-6.

roughly sketched, certain facts are obtainable concerning those employed in commerce, and concerning credit, money and contracts.

There is much uncertainty as to how far Israelites themselves actually took part in the carrying trade of the ancient world. They bought and sold, but that they continued to speak of the trader as a "Canaanite" suggests that the Hebrews had little part in the carrying of international traffic. In a list of social classes given by Isaiah (24:2), the buyer and seller, creditor and debtor, and the taker and giver of interest are mentioned; but nothing is said of the trader. It is likely that caravans were in the hands of non-Israelites, while the Hebrew remained a middle-man.

In neighboring Babylonia, we know that there had long been developed a system of credit and banking, much of it carried on by Temple officials. But we know of nothing similar in Israel or Judah. Not only in pre-exilic but also in later times, loans were made only to relieve necessity. The debtor class, therefore, were not merchants borrowing for investment but those in distress. David gathered about him in the cave of Adullam "every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt" (I Sam. 22:2). The widow for whom Elisha increased the oil was harassed by her husband's creditors, who were about to take her children as bondsmen (II Kings 4:1). For this reason interest was forbidden, and a characteristic prohibition is that a creditor must not keep his neighbor's garment in pledge over night,

"for that is his only covering, it is his garment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep?" (Exodus 22:25-27).

We have seen that the Hebrews were early accustomed to the use of money, but value was determined not by the stamp on the coin but by official weight. In II Kings 12:10-11, we have an account of the Temple receipts which were officially counted. "And it was so, when they saw that there was much money in the chest, that the king's scribe and the high priest came up, and they put up in bags and counted the money that was found in the house of Jehovah. And they gave the money that was weighed out into the hands of them that did the work." . . . This weighing of money made it important that the weights, perhaps stones kept in a bag (cf. Micah 6:11), should be true, an exhortation often on the lips of the prophets. Ornaments of exact weight were used as mediums of exchange, as the earrings of the traders killed by Gideon and his men. Isaac's servant had with him "a golden ring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for his hands of ten shekels weight in gold" (Gen. 24:22).

Compared with the more advanced methods of the Babylonians, early Hebrew contracts were extremely simple, but the essential points of all trade agreements are present in them. When Judah promised his daughter-in-law a kid of the flock, she asked a pledge; and he gave her his signet and his cord and staff. This pledge he was scrupulous to redeem

(Gen. 38:12 ff). When Abraham bought the cave of Machpelah, the contract was made in the presence of witnesses at the gate of the city, where most business deals were transacted. The money was weighed out, "current money with the merchants," and the exact extent of the purchase carefully defined: "the field of Ephron, which was before Mamre, the field, and the cave which was therein, and all the trees that were in the field, that were in all the border thereof round about" (Gen. 23).

From the early part of the seventh century, we have a more elaborate description of a business transaction, involving written deeds and the necessary seals. Jeremiah purchased a field from his cousin: "and [I] weighed him the money, even seventeen shekels of silver. And I subscribed the deed, and sealed it, and called witnesses, and weighed him the money in the balances. So I took the deed of the purchase, both that which was sealed, according to the law and custom, and that which was open: and I delivered the deed of the purchase unto Baruch, the son of Neriah, the son of Mahseiah, in the presence of Hanamel mine uncle's son [the seller], and in the presence of the witnesses that subscribed the deed of the purchase, before all the Jews that sat in the court of the guard. And I charged Baruch before them, saying, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel; Take these deeds, this deed of the purchase which is sealed, and this deed which is open, and put them in an earthen vessel; that they

may continue for many days" (Jeremiah 32:9-14).

Such was Hebrew business before the Exile. With the fall of Jerusalem, the history of the "chosen people" enters upon a new phase, epochal in their economic as well as their religious life.

CHAPTER III

AFTER THE EXILE

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The conquerors of Judah were far more advanced in business than their captives. For many centuries, the Babylonians had enjoyed a system of credit which approximates our modern banking methods. Joint enterprises for profit, warehouses and warehouse receipts, comparatively elaborate loans and corresponding legal paper were well known long before the Jew was acquainted with anything but the most elementary business. Nebuchadnezzar, who captured Jerusalem, seems to have extended his territory with the purpose of making Babylonia commercially supreme. The trade-routes to the East and to the South were in his hands, and during his reign Babylon became more than ever "the city of merchants."

His policy in deporting the better classes of Jews was in line with Nebuchadnezzar's commercial ambitions. According to the account in II Kings, he carried away "all the princes, and all the mighty men of valor, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and the smiths; none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land" (24:14). Such a policy meant not only the enrichment of Babylonia with the choicest of the captured peoples, but also the destruction of Jewish industry and

commerce. The Jews left behind could only eke out a meager peasant existence while their compatriots in Babylon, although they might hang their harps upon the willows, at least had a chance to make a comfortable living at the commercial center of the world.

There is good reason to think that the Jews took advantage of their exile. Ezekiel, who was the sole prophet among his fellow-countrymen at Babylon, gives us a glimpse of their interests. He was popular as a preacher, so that the Jews talked about him wherever they were and came eagerly to hear him preach; but the prophet was not deceived by his popularity. He was "unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument"; "for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their gain" (Ezekiel 33:32, 31). The picture is what one would expect. Exiles sentimental about the lost Zion gladly gathered to hear their prophet, but they paid little attention to his teachings because of absorption in the affairs of the new land.

At the overthrow of Babylonia by Cyrus in the second half of the sixth century B.C., the Jews were allowed to return; but we have reason to think that the more prosperous chose to remain in the land of their prosperity and, indeed, of their birth. The generation which had been deported had died out, and the new generation had become accustomed to Babylonian ways. Nevertheless, some did return to Jerusalem to begin the heart-breaking struggle to

rebuild their ruined city. We are not concerned with the details of that struggle but with the conditions of trade and industry.

The Persians who conquered Babylonia, built roads and promoted trade in a way that led to a great increase of commerce throughout Western Asia; but little benefit came to the Jews in Palestine. During the exile, foreigners had taken over their country and intermarried with the Jews who had been left behind. The Book of Nehemiah is eloquent of the difficulty with which the Jews who returned at last succeeded in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, thus insuring their personal safety. In a community so beset there was place only for necessary business.

For the maintenance of the city, food and other necessaries were brought by neighboring traders, including non-Jews, so that Nehemiah found it necessary to shut the gates of the city during the Sabbath and even to threaten the hucksters who encamped under the walls (Neh. 13:19-21). Trading with foreigners would not be encouraged by leaders who undertook, as did Ezra and Nehemiah, to separate the Jews from their pagan neighbors. Going so far as to compel Jews to put away their non-Jewish wives, Ezra would hardly be more tender with his country-men's business alliances.

Lacking trade with the outside world, energetic members of the community seem to have preyed upon their less fortunate brethren. Some of the poorer class came to Nehemiah complaining that they had

been compelled to mortgage their fields and vineyards in order to pay taxes; their creditors had foreclosed, taking even children as bondservants to satisfy debts. Nehemiah's answer was to call an assembly of the people and to demand the restoration of all mortgaged property, "also the hundredth part of the money, and of the grain, the new wine, and the oil" that had been exacted (Nehemiah 5:1-13).

A few years ago, in Egypt, scholars discovered papyri of the fifth and early fourth centuries which came from a colony of Jews who had been soldiers in the Persian armies. These papyri, which consist of legal, family, official and some literary documents, throw light upon Jewish society of the period in Egypt. The business documents show clearly the influence of advanced Babylonian methods. They show that the Jews abroad preserved their religious usages, but that they paid little attention to regulations forbidding interest from fellow-Jews. Perhaps similar influence might be observed in Judaea if we had the contemporary legal and commercial papers.

One of the Egyptian documents shows the business methods of the time, particularly the rigorous way in which a debtor was bound to the fulfillment of his obligation. The contract is from a woman to a fellow-Jew, and is in part as follows:

"Thou hast given me as a loan four shekels of silver, . . . according to the weights of the king. I will pay thee interest thereon at the rate of two

hallur per shekel per month, i. e., at the rate of eight hallur per month. If the interest is added to the capital [If I fail to pay the interest when due] I will pay thee interest upon this interest even as upon the capital. If the change of the year comes and I have not satisfied thy claim to thy capital and to the interest upon it according to the conditions of this document, then you, O Meshullam, and your sons are justified in seizing as pledge anything which thou mayest find in my possession, a house of brick, silver and gold, bronze and iron, manservant and maidservant, barley and spelt and any sort of food which thou mayest find in my possession, until I have fully paid thee thy capital with interest. . . . And if I die without having satisfied thy claim to thy money and the interest upon it, then my sons must pay thee in full this money and the interest upon it. If they, however, do not pay thee in full this money and the interest upon it, then thou, O Meshullam, hast the right to take to thyself any food or pledge which thou mayest find in their possession until they have paid thee in full thy capital with interest, while they will have no right to complain of thee before the magistrate and the judges, so long as this document is still in thy hands. If they, however, go to court notwithstanding, they shall not obtain a judgment so long as this document is still in thy hand." [1]

[1] *American Journal of Theology* xxii (1918), trans. by Dr. M. Sprengler. Also quoted in Smith, *The Moral Life of the Hebrews* (Chicago, c. 1923), pp. 217-18.

The interest charged seems to have been at the rate of about twenty-four per cent per annum. Among the Greeks in the fourth century, the usual interest rate on mortgages and loans was twelve per cent, except at Delos, where the uniform rate was ten per cent.

With the conquests of Alexander (333 to 323 B.C.), a new era came to Western Asia. Old national boundaries were broken down, and Grecian mercenaries were colonized throughout the vast territory which fell under Macedonian rule. The event most significant for the history of commerce during this period was the founding of Alexandria in Egypt. The Greeks, who were a maritime people, were able by the establishment of this important center to trade from Spain to India with only a short land transport from Alexandria to the Red Sea. With the growth of Alexandria, Tyre and Sidon declined. Land trade in Arabia persisted, but Damascus suffered by the centering of trade routes at Antioch.

For the Jews, the commercial results of Alexander's conquest were two-fold, as they effected business in Palestine and among the Jews scattered in the trading centers of the Mediterranean world. In Palestine, the decline of Tyre and Sidon and of Damascus may have had some effect; but on the whole goods would continue to move from Arabia and from Mesopotamia to Egypt along the old routes. The wars between Syria and Egypt, which came in the decades following the death of Alexander (323 B.C.), would be more destructive of this trade.

During much of the Greek period, however, the Jews were fairly prosperous.

The Book of Ecclesiasticus, which was written about 190 B.C., has many warnings against the evils of trade and has much to say of wealth. Josephus has a tall story concerning the son of a Jewish ruler, who, at about the same period, was able to make a fabulous gift to the king of Egypt.[2]

About 169 B.C., Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria, captured Jerusalem, and Jewish patriots rose in revolt. This revolt, led by the Maccabees, began a period of independence which lasted until the coming of the Romans about the middle of the first century B.C. Sir George Adam Smith has pointed out that the Maccabees and their successors were especially concerned to gain control of the trade routes.

There is some evidence that the Jews abroad profited by their commercial opportunities. Josephus retails with pride the honors paid to his people by foreign powers, and quotes the Greek historian, Strabo, to the effect that the Jews of Cos had accumulated eight hundred thousand talents (about a million and a half dollars) which Mithridates confiscated.[3] But the majority of the Jews of the Dispersion doubtless existed by labor and petty trade; they were not the international bankers of later fame.

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[2] *Antiquities of the Jews*, xii, 4.
[3] *Antiquities* xiv, 7, 2.

As we turn back to survey this short sketch of Jewish business during the Old Testament period, we are struck first by the fact that the Jew was not naturally a trader. Despite traditional reputation, the Hebrews learned the arts of commerce late in their racial history. By inheritance they were shepherds and farmers. Their geographical position forced them into some commercial relations with their neighbors, but they did not become masters of world trade. Their later reputation came only after they had been torn away from their own country and forced out among the Gentiles.

The contact of Jews with commerce was by way of other nations so that there was a clash of cultures accompanying trade. The traditional number of Solomon's wives testifies not so much to his personal charm as to his desire to make treaties with kings who were great traders. When the Queen of Sheba came to see Solomon, she may have been attracted by his wisdom, but she was possibly also a sort of royal commercial traveler. If the prophets objected vociferously to foreign treaties and to the profits of foreign trade, they possibly understood well enough that trade and political alliances went together, and that both introduced foreign customs and foreign religion. In addition to involving what must have been regarded as surrender to foreign cultures, trade was connected with oppression of the poor, with royal usurpation and with the growth of luxury and license. The question of trade could not, therefore,

be easily separated from religious and moral problems.

With the aid of our knowledge of the course of Hebrew business history we can turn to the discussion of business by the prophets, the lawyers and the "wise men."

CHAPTER IV

THE PROPHETS

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Coming out of the desert, the Hebrew tribes could never forget the kind of life they had lived there. Their prophets were given to pointing back to the desert days as times of greater purity and of nobler ideals than the confused periods when the Hebrew was slowly adjusting himself to the agricultural and commercial life of Palestine. Scholars think that they can trace the desert ideal in the writings of the prophets throughout Hebrew history, in prophetic insistence upon the simple life and upon economic democracy.

The first of the great prophets, Elijah, engaged in a conflict against adoption by the Israelites of their neighbors' gods. But the prophet understood that his countrymen were accepting not only foreign gods but also foreign ideals. The Jezebel against whom he poured out his wrath was a daughter of the King of Sidon, one of the great merchant cities of the times; and her influence was toward the breaking down of the rights of subjects. When Naboth refused to sell his vineyard, the foreign queen could not understand why the king should not, by fair means or foul, seize the coveted property. Then as

now, religion could not be separated from economic life.

Foreign traders brought in the worship of their own gods; even the garments and ornaments of their idols were staples of commerce (Jeremiah 10:9). The high-places and altars which the prophets condemned were centers of alien religion, but they were also probably sites of bazaars. Foreign idols and foreign business were inextricably connected in the mind of the prophets. To accept one was to accept the other.

It must not be forgotten also that the new economic order, that of business, meant city-life. Bazaars brought groups of people together to trade, and this led inevitably to cities. On the other hand, people who dwell in cities have to buy in order to live; and in order to buy, they must also sell. To the nomad, even to the tiller of the ground, the coming of trade means the coming of the city with all of its complexities and all of its evils. And in the face of the undisputed evils of city-life, the prophet often sighed for the peace of the good old days.

Hosea's worst word for Israel is that he is a "Canaanite," by which the prophet means "a merchant"; and he declares that God "will yet again make thee to dwell in tents" (Hosea 12:7-9). Zephaniah, in the latter part of the seventh century B.C., is perhaps the most pronounced believer in a complete return to the nomadic life. He looks for a total destruction of Philistine and Canaanite; the

fertile land of the sea-coast, with its agricultural wealth and its constant caravan and coastal trade, will be turned to "pastures, with cottages for shepherds and folds for flocks, And the coast shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah; they shall feed their flocks thereupon" (Zeph. 2:6-7). If others did not go quite so far, yet like Micah, they sometimes expected the complete destruction of the city: "Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest" (Micah 3:12).

For one thing, the new commercial civilization broke down the old tribal and family loyalties. The story of Naboth's vineyard may be cited again to illustrate this. Ahab offered to buy the vineyard of Naboth, allowing Naboth his choice of another vineyard or equivalent value in money. The point of the story is not that Ahab sought to cheat Naboth out of the property, but that Ahab was operating on principles true enough to commercial civilizations but directly contrary to nomadic customs. In commercial societies, the individual is supreme; he buys what he can and sells what he cares to sell. But among nomadic tribes the property is thought of as belonging to a family rather than to an individual. A loyal man will not sell his inheritance. The prophet, Elijah, took the part of Naboth and the tribal conscience, and wreaked vengeance on the Sidonian Jezebel, who had incited her husband to

disregard the solidarity of the Hebrew family in favor of the individualistic ethics of her commercial home.

Again, the new economy jeopardized the old, simple ways of living. When riches are accumulated and when the markets allow, luxury takes the place of simplicity; men must find some way to spend their new profits. In the pages of the eighth century prophets you can read descriptions of city life among the newly-rich. Amos fulminates against those who "lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; that sing idle songs to the sound of the viol; that invent for themselves instruments of music, like David; that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief oils" (Amos 6:4-6). These dainty livers had summer-houses and winter-houses, and they seem to have used ivory so freely in their furnishings that their houses were said to be of this prized material (Amos 3:15).

According to Amos, even worship had lost its ancient simplicity. After referring contemptuously to the feasts and offerings and music of the sanctuaries, he cries: "Did ye bring unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?" (5:25). The great sanctuaries, like Jerusalem and Bethel, were royal residences; and religion was associated with the display and expenditures of the court. Also the sanctuary was, as we have seen, a place of business; and, if the priests them-

selves did not engage in trade, the town was supported largely by those who did.

But if the prophets regretted the simpler life of the desert, they were chiefly concerned that the new complexities brought with them oppression, injustice and wrongdoing. After Solomon's death, a prophetic party had been concerned in the rebellion that divided the kingdom (I Kings 11:29ff.). It is expressly stated that Jehovah forsook Rehoboam because the Israelites had forsaken their God for the gods of the Sidonians, the Moabites and the Ammonites (11:33), that is for the gods of trading peoples, nations which had built up despotisms and economic injustices.

In the desert, where food was hard to get and luxury almost impossible, there was practical democracy. True, there was political inequality, and there were rich and poor; but there were no such gulfs as separate despot and slave, rich and poor in commercial societies. Even the poorest man in the desert had a living not far removed from that of the wealthiest. The stories of Doughty and Lawrence reveal the kind of life that the Arabian nomad lives to-day, which is essentially the same relatively simple life he has always lived. Against this background, idealized as the past and the remote are always idealized, the prophet saw the disorders and evils of the great commercial nations of the ancient world.

The attitude of the prophets toward Tyre is indicative of the way in which many contemporary

social evils were linked up in their minds with the development of commerce. Tyre was "the bestower of crowns, whose merchants are princes, whose traffickers are the honorable of the earth" (Isaiah 23:8); and there is a splendid description of her trade in Ezekiel 27. Tyre is condemned for her pride: "by thy great wisdom and by thy traffic hast thou increased thy riches, and thy heart is lifted up because of thy riches;—therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Because thou hast set thy heart as the heart of God, therefore, behold I will bring strangers upon thee. . . ." (Ezek. 28:5-7). There is no condemnation of trade as trade, but commerce has brought in evils; "By the abundance of thy traffic they filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned" (28:16). "By the multitude of thine iniquities, in the unrighteousness of thy traffic, thou hast profaned thy sanctuaries" (28:18).

Intercourse with these great commercial civilizations inevitably affected the Hebrews, especially in the north. In the eighth century, Hosea complained that Ephraim (i. e. Israel, the Northern Kingdom) "mixeth himself among the peoples . . . strangers have devoured his strength" (Hosea 7:8-9). The evils of a luxurious, money-proud, predatory society would come into the mountains of Judea and Samaria with the traders, and, to borrow a fine figure from Isaiah, would spread like a forest fire (Isa. 9:18). From the eighth century the prophets condemn unsparingly sins associated with business. Some of them arise out of the purchase of land and

the financing of crops; others are connected with barter and trade, doubtless between merchants and the caravans.

According to Amos, the stone houses of the rich were built with exorbitant taxes and rentals taken in kind (5:11). The greedy traders begrudged the very holy days which were celebrated at the great shrines, because they were impatient to be at their profitable occupation of cheating the peasants by false weights and scant coin and with faulty goods. "Hear this, O ye that would swallow up the needy, and cause the poor of the land to fail, saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell grain? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and dealing falsely with balances of deceit; that we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes, and sell the refuse of the wheat?" (8:4-6).

A generation or two later, Micah cried against amassing riches at the expense of the peasant, apparently by foreclosing mortgages: "Woe to them that devise iniquity and work evil upon their beds! When the morning is light, they practise it, because it is in the power of their hand. And they covet fields, and seize them; and houses, and take them away; and they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage" (Micah 2:1-2). "The women of my people ye cast out from their pleasant houses. . . ." (2:9).

But dishonesty in trade is also responsible for the wealth of the city-dwellers:

> Can I forget the wicked treasures in the house
> of the wicked,
> And the short measure that is accursed?
> Can I treat as pure him with the wicked
> scales,
> And with the bag of false weight (6:10-11.
> *An American Translation*)

In the sixth century, when Ezekiel indicts Jerusalem for her sins, he declares: "In thee have they taken bribes to shed blood; thou hast taken interest and increase, and thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbors by oppression . . ." (22:12). Opposition to interest will be spoken of again in the next chapter, but it should be noticed here that the prophet lists the taking of interest and the keeping of pledges for loans among the chief sins; Ezekiel's just man "hath not wronged any, but hath restored to the debtor his pledge, hath taken nought by robbery, hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment; he that hath not given forth upon interest, neither hath taken any increase. . . ." (18:7-8).

The emphasis of the prophets is upon the wickedness of the cities and of their business life; it is hardly fair to suppose that, with such exceptions as Zephaniah, they seriously proposed a return to the economic and social conditions of the desert. There are, indeed, some indications that they looked forward to an establishment of Israel's life in a purified city. Scholars have questioned whether the

closing paragraphs of Amos, Hosea and Micah are not of later date, but there is good argument for the view that the more cheerful pictures with which these prophecies end are from these writers themselves. At any rate, there is in the Book of Amos as it now stands the explicit statement: "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up its ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old. . . . Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. And I will bring back the captivity of my people Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them. . . ." (9:11-14). And Micah looks forward to "a day for building thy walls!" (7:11).

True, in the pictures of the establishment of the Lord's house in the top of the mountains (the mount at Jerusalem) which we find in Isaiah 2 and in Micah 4, there is no mention of economic supremacy. But the experience of the Jews in Babylon opened their eyes anew to the importance of a prominent place in the world's trade. What Solomon had seen long ago, and what some of his more worldly successors appreciated, the Jews who learned the lessons of Babylon did not forget.

We can trace a new interest in economic matters in Ezekiel, who shows himself familiar with details of international trade. In a famous chapter on Tyre

(Ezekiel 27), the prophet gives one of the most complete pictures of ancient world commerce that we have. Tyre is pictured as a great ship built of products from many lands. She procured metals from Spain; slaves and brass from Asia Minor; horses and mules perhaps from the same territory (Togarmah?); from coastal countries (Africa?), ivory tusks and ebony; from Edom, garnets, purple dyes, embroidered work, fine linen, corals and rubies; from Judah and Israel, wheat, wax, honey, oil and balsam; from Damascus, wine and white wool; from various parts of Arabia, iron, cassia, calamus, saddle-cloths, lambs, rams and goats, spices, precious stones and gold; from Mesopotamian merchants, choice fabrics, mantles, "stuffs of various colors, and strongly twisted skeins." Ships of Spain carried the Tyrian traders' merchandise throughout the Mediterranean world.

Such intimate knowledge of the commerce of one of the great merchant cities betrays an interest on the part of the prophet which fits in with what we know of the commercial tendencies of the Jews in Exile. It is to be expected then that in picturing the restored city more attention should be given to world dominance in business. We find just this in the picture drawn by the Great Prophet of the Exile. The returning tribes are to bring their wealth with them (Isa. 60:9), and the restored city will be the center of world trade: "thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut by day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the wealth of the

nations and their kings led captive. . . ." (60:11).

In addition to a new appreciation of the importance of business, some later prophets, especially Jeremiah and Ezekiel, were by their teachings strengthening the foundations of the new economic order. Elijah had defended Naboth's attempt to protect the inheritance of his family against the Sidonian queen's unscrupulous effort to force the ways of a commercial civilization upon the Hebrews. It was the old solidarity against the new individualism. Business was with the latter. The older conception, that property belongs to a tribe or to a family and may not be alienated, is incompatible with trade. Now the ancient prophets had stood by the old order inherited from their nomad ancestors. Their messages had been largely to the nation; the nation sinned, the nation would be punished. God would have mercy upon the nation, and the nation, or a remnant of it, would be restored. But in Jeremiah, and later in Ezekiel, the individual came into his own in religion as he was already coming into his own in business.

The people had been dependent upon the state and the state-church for their religion, but when, in the latter part of the seventh century, the country shrines were wiped out and all worship centered in Jerusalem, something had to be done for the peasants who no longer had the support of organized worship for their religion. Out of their experiences as well as from the prospective isolation of the Babylonian exiles, Jeremiah forged his doctrine of a

covenant between Jehovah and the individual (Jer. 31). This doctrine Ezekiel later elaborated in a famous chapter (Ezekiel 18) formulating the theory of religious individualism.

I do not want to exaggerate the relation of this to the history of the Old Testament attitude toward business, but it seems to me that the two changes occurred side by side. The old idea of property as belonging to the family was giving way to the commercial view that a man can sell or buy as he is able or as he chooses. At the same time, the notion that sin is a collective act, that the family is responsible for the sin of the individual (cf. Achan, Joshua 7:16-26), was giving way before the doctrine that every man is responsible for himself. The prophets who advocated individualism in religion were, it seems to me, preparing the way also for the application of that doctrine in economic life. It is to be expected that Jews in a later period, when they had accepted individualism in religion, would see no reason why religion can not be preserved in a business civilization as well as in an agricultural or pastoral one.

It is plain, then, that the prophets, with all their devotion to the ideals of the desert, were not merely preservers of an outgrown way of living. On the whole, they denounced not a type of civilization as such but the injustices and evils that were in that civilization. This is true even of those most devoted to the older ways. As Professor McCown has so well phrased it: "The nomadic ideal as Hosea, Micah,

and Zephaniah espouse it is no mere blind allegiance to the customs and moral judgments of the group, but a conscious choice of certain manners of life as the only righteous social order."[1] In the old order or in the new, man must do justly, love kindness and walk humbly with his God (Micah 6:8).

[1] *The Genesis of the Social Gospel* (N. Y., 1930), p. 148. An excellent study of the social background of the gospel.

CHAPTER V

THE LAW

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THE LAW

In reading the laws of the Old Testament, one is liable to a common error, an assumption that a practice forbidden did not exist. On the contrary, "so many laws argue so many sins." If students in some distant future read the many provisions in American statute-books against theft, they may assume that Americans never stole, when, in fact, the presence of these laws proves that some of our contemporaries do steal. But study of a nation's laws not only reveal what was considered evil, at any one period, but they help us to trace the development of the ethical ideas of a people. They also help us to follow the growth of social institutions, since, for example, a nation of shepherds do not have highly developed codes of corporation law.

Scholars recognize a development in Hebrew legislation. Under more primitive pastoral and agricultural conditions, simple courts of justice administering laws designed to cover the ordinary cases brought before them, were sufficient; but in a monarchy deriving at least part of its wealth from international commerce more suitable legislation was imperative. No one believes that a complete reconstruction of Hebrew legal history can now be made,

but a recognition of the simple fact of development is necessary for any satisfactory interpretation of the Old Testament's attitude toward business.

In earlier times, the elders of a village or city would constitute the law court, before which witnesses appeared and by which sentence was given. Naboth was hailed before such a court, and the "two base fellows" testified there that the unlucky landholder had cursed God and the king (I Kings 21:8-13). The priests heard some cases, probably those which had to do with ceremonial law, although when decision was difficult in other matters they may have been appealed to in order that the cause might be determined by casting lots (cf. I Sam. 14:41). In later days, the priests kept the Book of the Law in the temple (cf. II Kings 22:8) and may have been interpreters of the written law.

National leaders would naturally be appealed to in difficult cases; in an early day, they were called "judges." This prepared the way for judgment by the kings after the monarchy was established. True, we have no evidence that there was any consistent system of appeal; but David was willing to interfere in the supposititious case which Nathan outlined to him (II Sam. 12:1-6), and Solomon gained a reputation for wisdom from his decisions (I Kings 3:16-28). As conditions demanded more facilities for administering justice, subsidiary judges and courts were established. Absalom complained that there were no deputies in certain cities, and curried favor with litigants by assuring them that he would have

seen justice if he had had authority (II Sam. 15:2-4). In the seventeenth chapter of Deuteronomy, there is explicit direction for courts composed of lay judges and priests, which are to hear difficult cases (vv. 8-13).

After the exile, there may have been a better systematization of the judicial system. Certainly in the New Testament period, the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem, composed of seventy-one members of whom the high-priest was president, and the local sanhedrins were courts of justice. It is assumed that Josephus describes the system in his own day (first century A.D.) when he writes of the seven judges in each city, each judge having two Levites as clerks. If the local judges were unable to give a just decision, the cause was sent to Jerusalem, there to be decided by "the high priest, the prophet, and the Sanhedrin." [1]

A matter was proven by the testimony of two witnesses (cf. Matt. 26:60), and the Jewish law against perjury was very severe. Deuteronomy provides that a false witness shall suffer the loss that his testimony would have inflicted on the innocent (19:16-21). Josephus informs us that women may not testify "on account of the levity and boldness of their sex," and that servants are not to be heard, "on account of the ignobility of their soul; since it is probable that they may not speak truth, either out of hope of gain, or fear of punishment." [2]

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[1] *Antiquities,* iv, 8, 14.
[2] *Antiquities,* IV, 8, 15.

It must not be assumed from the interest of the Old Testament in justice that the right always triumphed. The prophets complain bitterly of bribery: "the judge is ready for a reward," says Micah (7:3). Then, as now, the poor faced the difficulty of sustaining heavy court actions and receiving justice from judges predisposed to favor their own class.

This much concerning judicial process in the Old Testament period is necessary if we are to assess rightly the attitude of the Hebrews toward business as this attitude is reflected in their law. From this sketch of Hebrew courts and procedure, we may turn to provisions for the simple business of the early nomadic and agricultural periods.

Nomadic tribes were liable to dispute over pasturage, such as the well-known controversy of Abraham and Lot (Gen. 13:7-9); or over watering-places, as in the case of Abraham and Abimelech (Gen. 21:25). There were business transactions such as Abraham's purchase of the cave of Machpelah (Gen. 23). Early laws provided for these eventualities and for the numerous difficulties involving men whose wealth was in cattle and slaves.

Theft of an ox or sheep was to be atoned for by payment in kind, five oxen for an ox, four sheep for a sheep (Exodus 22:1). The scale of damage for an injury to animals owned by another was carefully worked out. If a man dug a pit into which his neighbor's ox or ass fell, the owner made good the loss: "he shall give money unto the owner thereof,

and the dead beast shall be his [i. e. the owner of the pit or cistern]" (21:33-34). If an ox gored another, the live ox was to be sold and the price divided; the dead ox was also to be divided. Knowledge that the ox was dangerous threw a responsibility on the owner, and he must pay accordingly (21:35-36). Provision was made for loss of a borrowed animal or of borrowed money (22:10-15). It was further enjoined that one must give assistance to lost or overburdened animals even "of him that hateth thee" (23:4-5), although there was no penalty attached to this law. In the same early code there are clauses looking toward the protection of crops from loose beasts or from fire (22:5). The poor were to be protected from extortion; a neighbor's garment must not be taken in pledge, nor interest exacted (22:25-27).

In addition to his animals, crops and his little money, the primitive Hebrew counted his wealth in slaves. With our modern ideas we are likely to do the ancient man an injustice. His slaves were mainly household servants, and in a day when there was little hired labor such an institution was not only economically necessary but often humanitarian. The slave shared his master's lot, and the law recognized his rights. If a master knocked out even the tooth of a Hebrew slave he was supposed to free him (Exodus 21:27). At the end of six years, the Hebrew servant was free. This and other humane provisions of the law were disregarded, but we must not forget the existence of the ideal.

The comparative humanity of this early law must not, however, obscure the fact that the slave was property. The barbarous provision that if a man beat his slave so that he died, yet survival for a day or two absolved the master, is justified on the express ground: "for he is his money [property]" (Exodus 21:20-21). The master could punish his own at will, although he must not maim or (immediately) cause death. There is no provision for freeing after six years any but Hebrew slaves; indeed, in a later code, a regular traffic in alien slaves is advised as a means of providing inheritance for children, since foreign slaves were "bondsmen forever" (Lev. 25:44-46).

The business aspect of slavery is illustrated further in the selling of men and their families for debt. The poor widow who complained to Elisha (II Kings 4:1ff.) was about to lose her two children for her late husband's debts. It was this kind of slavery which the law tried to mitigate by the seventh-year freedom; and later legislation attempted even greater mitigation by requiring that the newly released slave should be provided by his former master with sufficient sheep, wheat and wine to give him a new start in life. With shrewd understanding of human nature, this statute concluded: "It shall not seem hard unto thee . . . for to the double of the hire of the hireling hath he served thee six years: and Jehovah thy God will bless thee in all that thou doest" (Deut. 15:12-18).

As the Hebrews became farmers, the Law concerned itself also with real estate. The description

of Jeremiah's purchase (Jer. 32:6-10) shows how complicated the process of legal transfer had become by the beginning of the seventh century B.C. The very complication of the process testifies to the necessity of guarding against fraud. Isaiah's reference to those who joined house to house and field to field (Isa. 5:8) proves the monopolistic spirit of at least some who longed for great estates. That these were not always satisfied with legal means is evidenced, not only by prophetic denunciations, but also by laws protecting landmarks (cf. Deut. 19:14).

An interesting attempt to prevent temporary losses from completely alienating a family's patrimony was attempted in the Levitical legislation. The owner of city property was to have one year in which to redeem a dwelling-house which he had been forced to sell. If he had been compelled to part with his farm, he could redeem it at any time. Moreover, every fiftieth year was to be a year of "Jubilee," when the slates would be wiped clean: land would revert to its original owner, and everything would start over again. In other words, there could be no sale of farmlands in perpetuity, but only forty-nine year leases. Values were to be computed according to the number of years the lease had to run before the next Jubilee. This law seems never to have been put into actual practice.

Further protection of a family's patrimony was provided by rather elaborate rights of redemption on the part of the next of kin to a deceased Hebrew. In the last chapter of the Book of Ruth we have a

detailed account of the legal process by which Boaz redeemed Elimelech's inheritance. The elders of the "city" were called together at the city-gate, and Boaz and Elimelech's nearest of kin appeared before them. It was proclaimed in the presence of the elders that Naomi was selling the piece of land which had belonged to her son, Elimelech, and the nearest of kin was given the opportunity to redeem it. This he offered to do, complying with the form necessary in the case; but on the further statement—a fact he already knew, of course—that the buyer must also take the widow, the nearest of kin declined. Boaz, as next in line of succession, then agreed to redeem the land and to marry the widow.

The ceremony by which this transfer of the right of redemption from the next of kin to the next in succession was consummated, is expressly stated to be an ancient ceremony. The way in which it is explained indicates that at the time of writing the book the manner of transfer had become obsolete. "Now this was the ancient custom in Israel: to validate any transaction in the matter of the right of redemption and its conveyance, the one pulled off his sandal, and gave it to the other; this was the manner of attesting in Israel." (Ruth 4:7. This and the following from *An American Translation.*)

The ceremony of the shoe did not complete the transaction. Boaz declared, in the presence of the witnesses, that he had made the purchase both of the land and of the widow. The people in the gate and the elders responded: "We are witnesses. May

the Lord make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, both of whom built up the house of Israel; may you achieve wealth in Ephrath, and gain fame in Bethlehem; and from the offspring that the Lord gives you by this young woman, may you have a house like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah" (4:11-12).

In the earliest code we find the express provision: "If thou lend money to any of my people with thee that is poor, thou shalt not be to him as a creditor; neither shall ye lay upon him interest" (Exodus 22:25). Such a law enforced in a commercial community would immediately put a stop to business. This is just the point; the law originated in a non-commercial community. In pastoral and agricultural civilizations there is but one reason for borrowing money; that is, to relieve necessity. The farmer borrows to finance his crop, but where there is little trade such borrowing is not to make money but to provide food and clothing until harvest. The law in Leviticus 25:35-37 makes clear the conditions under which debt was commonly contracted. "And if thy brother be waxed poor, and his hand fail with thee; then thou shalt uphold him: as a stranger and a sojourner shall he live with thee. Take thou no interest of him or increase. . . . Thou shalt not give him thy money upon interest, nor give him thy victuals for increase."

The lender was not altogether forbidden protection in the way of pledges, but restrictions were thrown around the taking of collateral. If a man

pledged his garment, the lender must return the pledge before nightfall (Exodus 22:26). A widow's raiment could not be taken in pledge (Deut. 24:17). The same law exempted mills and the upper millstones, for to take these was "to take a man's life to pledge" (Deut. 24:6). With a fine delicacy, a lender was forbidden to go into a borrower's house to secure a pledge (Deut. 24:10-11).

That the prohibition against interest did not prevent the evil is attested by numerous references in the prophets and in the law. Nevertheless, the aim of the leaders of Israel is clear enough. It is true that the protection of the law extended only to Hebrews, since it was permissible to charge interest to a foreigner (Deut. 23:20). But Christians can not conveniently cast stones at this self-protective device of primitive Hebrews. Twenty-five hundred years later, medieval cities, which forbade Christians to take interest, admitted Jews to serve as bankers because the Jews were damned already and the added sin of usury would not materially affect their destiny.

In a civilization where debt was connected only with want, the concern of prophets and religious leaders to forbid interest and to limit the lender's right to claim pledges for his loans is a testimony to the social conscience at the heart of Hebrew religion. But the Christian Church clung to this distrust of interest long after the social conditions which produced it had passed away. The very word used in the King James' Version tells the story: interest

is "usury." Only as commercial transactions involving the borrowing of money to make money have become so important a part of our economic life have we come to differentiate between the two.

One other provision of Hebrew law relating to debt should be noticed, although it seems never to have been enforced. This was a simple bankruptcy law modeled upon the "Jubilee year." At the end of every seven years, every creditor was to cancel the debts owing to him from fellow-Hebrews, although he could exact his money from Gentile debtors. (Deut. 15:1-6). The impracticability of such a system perhaps explains why it was not actually carried out.

When Nehemiah attempted to protect the poor in Jerusalem in the fifth century, he did not resort to a sabbatical year but simply ordered restitution of property which had been foreclosed upon by the rich. He also secured a reduction in exactions in kind. The situation illustrates what must have happened often in Israel. The poor, after a crop failure, were compelled to borrow in order to buy food and to pay their taxes; when their property had been seized, they still borrowed for taxes and sustenance, this time putting up their children as collateral. So the terrible round continued until the poor were the property of the rich (Nehemiah 5:1-13).

Even in so cursory a survey we see that Hebrew business law reflected contemporary social conditions; most legislation is concerned with controversies arising among shepherds and farmers. City

life and its commerce receives much less attention, although there is increasing regulation of business as time goes on. In the tone of much of the legislation we can see the dominant interest of the Hebrew prophet. He is nowise concerned to promote efficiency in business transactions. In fact, some provisions, such as that forbidding interest and that providing for easy bankruptcy, would, if enforced, have made business impossible. The chief concern of the Hebrew lawmakers becomes plain when we read the careful provisions for manumission of the Hebrew slave, for protection of the debtor against interest and against the exaction of excessive pledges, even against insult by over-anxious creditors. The Hebrew law was concerned to protect the poor and to secure justice for the oppressed.

Again we must be warned against assuming that the laws were perfectly enforced. It is obvious that interest was charged, and we have seen that the bankruptcy statute remained a dead letter. Moreover, the Gentile was not included in the merciful exemptions granted to Hebrew slaves and debtors; only a few great spirits, like Isaiah and the author of the Book of Jonah, seem to have come so near the spirit of Jesus. Nevertheless, the law reveals a sense of social obligation. Whatever the later history of business, the Old Testament tells the story of a nation whose ideals, however far above its practice, exalted men above profits.

CHAPTER VI

THE SAGES

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THE SAGES

The Prophets and the Law are two of the great divisions of the Old Testament, but there is another that must not be omitted in even a slight sketch of business in the Bible. There is the so-called Wisdom Literature, which includes such books as Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. To these should be added for our purpose Ecclesiasticus, a book similar to Proverbs and written about the third century B.C. This book is an apocryphal book but may yet be found in old Protestant Bibles.

There are certain fairly constant characteristics of these Wisdom books, but for us it is important only to notice their general nature and the times which they represent.

The prophets came with a message to be proclaimed, a message which was a "burden" to the prophet, which burned as a live coal from off the altar (Isaiah 6:6). The wise man spoke out of cool reflection; his wisdom was the accumulated experience of countless thoughtful observers who saw life calmly and who had time to meditate upon the ways of men. Sometimes, the men whose wisdom is recorded in these books were passionate in the expression of their ideals. Job, in spite of his reputation for

patience, was a fiery opponent of contemporary ideas of Providence. Usually, however, the wise men, while confident advocates of prophetic ideals, preferred instruction to exhortation. Books like Proverbs present more or less disconnected sayings and short essays showing the foolishness of wickedness and the wisdom of righteousness.

Scholars are generally agreed to date the Wisdom books in the post-exilic period, that is, in the four or five hundred years preceding the birth of Christ. Individual proverbs and sections may go back to much earlier times, but the books themselves were doubtless gathered together in this period. Consequently, we may assume that the wise men reflect the attitude of Judaism after the Restoration.

With some exceptions, particularly Job, the wise men believed that righteousness leads to prosperity, to "length of days, and years of life, and peace" (Prov. 3:2).

> Honor Jehovah with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase:
> So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy vats shall overflow with new wine" (3:9-10).

This conception of the connection between goodness and prosperity was open to certain moral dangers: it might discourage individual effort along practical lines, or it might lead to moral obliquity on the ground that the end justifies the means. With the wise men, the doctrine did neither. They stood fast

by the old Hebrew morality, and they insisted upon the need of practical wisdom in the conduct of one's affairs.

It is this latter teaching of the sages which is of first importance for the history of business in the Bible. The wise men assumed that practical things are religiously important. Therefore, they gave advice about matters which some pious people would consider outside the pale of religious interest. The farmer is advised to look well after his herds, gathering in his hay and herbs (Proverbs 27:23-27); repeatedly the reader is warned against endorsing notes, especially for strangers (cf. 6:1-5); there is even advice about table manners (23:1-2) and observations about family life, which were more quoted before woman's suffrage than now. Some of the latter are not without a touch of humor. At least, it is more courteous so to interpret the saying in Ecclesiasticus 27:14: "A silent woman is a gift of the Lord."

The sages were realists, and to them nothing which affected man's ordinary life was foreign to religion. It is well for a man to know the ways of the world, and so the sages sketch characters who are familiar enough even to-day. Who does not know this trader?

> It is bad, it is bad, saith the buyer;
> But when he is gone his way, then he boasteth.
> (Prov. 20:14).

Too many also know the borrower described by Jesus ben Sirach:

Many have reckoned a loan as a windfall,
And have given trouble to those that helped them.
Till he hath received, he will kiss a man's hands;
And for his neighbour's money he will speak submissly;
And when payment is due, he will prolong the time,
And return words of heaviness, and complain of the times. (Ecclus. 29:4, 5).

Looking at the world with open eyes, the wise men were not deceived as to the relative positions of rich and poor. "The rich man's wealth is his strong city" (Prov. 18:11); and while the poor man must use entreaties, the rich can afford to speak roughly (18:23). The rich man toils in getting his money, but when he rests he has an income to support him. The poor man toils also, but when he rests, "he becometh needy" (Ecclus. 31:3-4). "Every man is a friend of him that giveth gifts"; but "all the brethren of the poor do hate him" (Prov. 19:6-7).

No more pathetic picture of dependent old age has ever been drawn than that in Ecclesiasticus:

Better is the life of a poor man under a shelter of logs,
Than sumptuous fare in another man's house.
With little or with much be well satisfied.
It is a miserable life to go from house to house:
And where thou art a sojourner, thou shalt not dare to open thy mouth.
Thou shalt entertain [as a servant], and give to drink, and have no thanks:

And besides this thou shalt hear bitter words.
"Come hither, thou sojourner, furnish a table,
And if thou hast aught in thy hand, feed me with it."
"Go forth, thou sojourner, from the face of honour;
My brother is come to be my guest; I have need of my house."
These things are grievous to a man of understanding:
The upbraiding of house-room, and the reproaching of the money-lender. (29:22-28).

Much of human misery is caused by oppression. On this the sage agrees with the prophet in his denunciation of dishonesty and injustice. "There are that pluck the fatherless from the breast," cries Job, "and they take the infant from the poor as security" (24:9—*An American Translation*). But even then the poor were especially an urban problem; out of the city came the groan of man's misery (Job 24:12).

References to the relations between rich and poor in this period take on a note of bitterness which indicates a growing gulf in Hebrew society. City life with its accompanying commercialism was opening the chasm which is not so noticeable in strictly agricultural communities. In the Psalms, most of which are assigned to the centuries immediately preceding the Christian era, there are many verses depicting the woes of the poor and the cruelty of the rich.

> In the pride of the wicked the poor is hotly pursued.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> He lieth in wait to catch the poor:
> He doth catch the poor, when he draweth him in his net (Ps. 10:2, 9).

The vengeful note in many of the Psalms is understandable when we remember that it comes from those who denounce injustice. In the 109th Psalm, the terrible imprecations against the wicked are because he "persecuted the poor and needy man, and the broken in heart to slay them" (109:16). Jesus Ben Sirach is even more bitter:

> What peace is there between the hyena and the dog?
> And what peace between the rich man and the poor?
> Wild asses are the prey of lions in the wilderness;
> So poor men are pasture for the rich (Ecclus. 13:18-19).

The means of injustice are those denounced by the prophets. They include removing the landmarks in order to secure the orphan's land by fraud (Prov. 23:10) and the use of false weights and scales (cf. Prov. 20:23). Job speaks of those who take the widow's ox and the clothing of the poor for pledges (24:2-4) and who oppress their laborers:

They [the poor] make oil within the walls of
these men;
They tread their winepresses, and suffer thirst.
(24:11)

On the other hand, there is little said of interest-takers. Indeed interest itself is referred to only once in the Book of Proverbs and then in an ambiguous connection (Prov. 28:8). In the Apocrypha, the word does not seem to occur at all. Is this omission to be ascribed to an assumption that the law forbidding interest is too well-known to repeat? Or had interest become so much a part of business that it was no longer regarded as unqualifiedly evil?

It is worthy of remark that the wisdom books have frequent references to those who go surety for another's debts.

My son, if thou art become surety for thy
neighbor,
If thou hast stricken thy hands for a stranger;
Thou art snared by the words of thy mouth,
Thou art taken with the words of thy mouth.
Do this now, my son, and deliver thyself,
Seeing thou art come into the hand of thy
neighbor:
Go, humble thyself, and importune thy neighbor;
Give not sleep to thine eyes,
Nor slumber to thine eyelids;
Deliver thyself as a roe from the hand of the
hunter,
And as a bird from the hand of the fowler.
(Prov. 6:1-5).

Be thou not one of them that strike hands,
Or of them that are sureties for debts.
If thou hast not wherewith to pay,
Why should he take away thy bed from under thee? (Prov. 22:26-27).

Be not surety above thy power:
And if thou be surety, take thought as one that will have to pay (Ecclus. 9:13).

Especially do the wise men warn against going surety for strangers!

Take his garment that is surety for a stranger;
And hold him in pledge that is surety for a foreign woman (Prov. 27:13).

The earnestness with which these practices are mentioned would seem to reflect their frequent occurrence. Whether they indicate only a too good-natured compliance on the part of guarantors of notes, or whether they testify to an increase in a simple form of stock-company enterprises, is not clear. The former is more likely, since surety for a friend in need is recognized as the duty of a good man. But exhortations to charity are well qualified by cautions and warnings of the ingratitude of borrowers.

A good man will be surety for his neighbour;
And he that hath lost shame will fail him.
Forget not the good offices of thy surety;
For he hath given his life for thee.

A sinner will overthrow the good estate of his surety;
And he that is of an unthankful mind will fail him that delivered him.
Suretiship hath undone many that were prospering,
And shaken them as a wave of the sea:
Mighty men hath it driven from their homes;
And they wandered among strange nations.
A sinner that falleth into suretiship,
And undertaketh contracts for work, shall fall into lawsuits.
Help thy neighbour according to thy power,
And take heed to thyself that thou fall not to the same (Ecclus. 29:14-20).

It is evident that the sages did not regard good business practice as beneath the interest of the moralist. On the contrary, their identification of wisdom and goodness implied the exaltation of financial prudence to a moral quality. For this reason they had much to say about the sluggard, who saith: "There is a lion without" (Prov. 22:13). His sins were not simply that he did not work, but that he made no provision for the future.

The sluggard will not plow by reason of the winter;
Therefore he shall beg in harvest, and have nothing (Prov. 20:4).

The famous description of the field of the sluggard, "the man void of understanding," says nothing of

the worth of labor for its own sake, but speaks of the evils of poverty, which comes as a robber, and of want, which comes as an armed man (Prov. 24:30-34).

In Ecclesiasticus, there is a description of the artisan and of his work which contrasts sharply with the Greek feeling that manual labor is dishonorable. The Hebrew sage recognizes that the artisan has not the leisure to become learned after the manner of the scribe, the professional student of the Law. Nevertheless, a workman can become wise in his own work. Working-men will not have high places in society; they will not sit on "the seat of the judge," nor in the "assembly":

> But they will maintain the fabric of the world;
> And in the handywork of their craft is their prayer (Ecclus. 38:34).

The importance of such an attitude can hardly be overestimated. It meant that the artisan was to be honored as wise in his own sphere and as offering up acceptable work as the religious equivalent of the formal services possible to his more leisured brethren. The worker was circumscribed not by the nature of his work but only by the demands of his employment.

Yet here again the Hebrew exalted not labor *per se* but the independence which comes by labor. Just as the prophet had contended for every Israelite's right to his own vine and fig tree, so the sage poured

out his scorn upon the lazy man who sacrifices his chance for a decent living. It is in this sense that we are to understand the famous maxim: "Go to the ant, thou sluggard" (Prov. 6:6). The ant, whatever it may be to modern minds, was to the ancient not the symbol of unremitting toil but of foresight!

> The ants are a people not strong,
> Yet they provide their food in the summer
> (Prov. 30:25).

The fable of the ant and of the grasshopper who danced all summer and was hungry in the winter is the proper commentary on these verses.

In all this it seems that the sages are more friendly toward business than were the prophets. We know that after Alexander's conquests (333-323 B.C.), the Jews came into closer contact with Greek civilization and that there grew up even in Jerusalem a Greek party, that is a party favoring the introduction of Greek customs among the Jews. How far the Jews advanced in their participation in trade we do not know, although we have seen that individuals seem to have prospered greatly both in Palestine and in the Mediterranean world. Some have even thought that the description of a storm at sea in the 107th Psalm reflects a renewed participation of Jews in Mediterranean sea-trade. "Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days" (Eccl. 11:1) may be advice to take part in the Mediterranean trade, where investments in voyages might be

many months in bringing returns. We can imagine that a small retail dealer, who had always traded face to face, would be hardly persuaded to risk money in a venture in which ships were sent on a long tedious voyage to Alexandria and on to Italy or Spain.

Whatever the nature of legitimate Jewish business, the wise men seem to accept it as a part of life. Usually, that which appears in their writings is of a simple sort, bringing not wealth but the necessities of life. The normal Jewish family of the period is perhaps reflected in the picture of the model wife in the last chapter of Proverbs. She manages her household, carrying on simple home manufacture of clothes and carpets and tapestry. But she is also the business man of the house: she buys a good field and plants a vineyard, and she makes linen garments and girdles to sell to the merchants (the word is still "Canaanite"). For this reason,

> Her husband is known in the gates,
> When he sitteth among the elders of the land.

Quieter of manner, more philosophic in spirit, the wise man remained true to the ideals of his people and faith. The aim of life is not wealth and luxury, and the defense of the poor is one of the chief duties of the good man. Closer to the ordinary man in interests, the sage appreciated the value of money: therefore, he advised prudence and thrift. But the ideal was neither too much nor too little.

Two things have I asked of thee;
Deny me them not before I die:
Remove far from me falsehood and lies;
Give me neither poverty nor riches;
Feed me with the food that is needful for me:
Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is
the Lord?
Or lest I be poor, and steal,
And use profanely the name of my God
(Prov. 30:7-10).

CHAPTER VII

IN THE TIMES OF JESUS

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We have seen that in the Greek period of Palestinian history, the Jews prospered by the revival of trade after Alexander's conquests.

In the period between Ecclesiasticus (c. 200 B.C.) and the birth of Jesus (c. 6 B.C.), the Jews seem to have continued in relative prosperity. They had resources sufficient to attain freedom in the struggle begun by the Maccabees (168 B.C.), and in the latter part of the first century B.C. Herod could find enough money to undertake great construction enterprises, including the rebuilding of the Temple.

Herod ruled by virtue of skillful alliance with the Romans, and his reign was an extension of the general Roman principle of promoting business. This interest of ancient Rome is not so commonly appreciated as it should be. In illustration of Roman policy, Professor Grant quotes from Cicero's oration, "For the Manilian Law." In this speech, the great orator pled for the protection of the empire not only from war but from the fear of it. "For in other concerns," said Cicero, "damage is sustained when calamity arrives; but in the case of revenues, not only the arrival of evil but the bare dread of it brings disaster. For when the enemy's troops are not

far away, even though no actual invasion has taken place, flocks are abandoned, farming is given up, sailings of merchants are cancelled. In consequence, neither from harbour dues, nor from tithes, nor from the tax on pasture lands, can any revenue be maintained; indeed, it often happens that the produce of an entire year is lost by one rumour of danger, by one alarm of war." [1] The "Roman peace" was thus rooted in their economic policy.

How far the Romans actually promoted the prosperity of an individual province depended, of course, upon many things, including the capacity and greed of local officials. In Palestine, there seem to have been some real benefits from Roman rule. The country itself was possibly much more fruitful than now, producing among other things the staples: the vine, the olive and the fig. Some allowance must be made for Josephus's patriotic exaggeration, but he doubtless spoke with truth when he wrote of Judea and Samaria as "very fruitful," [2] although he must have given reins to his imagination at least in the population he attributed to Galilean towns. In his classic description of the northern country, he says: "their soil is universally rich and fruitful, and full of plantations of trees of all sorts, insomuch, that it invites the most slothful to take pains in its cultivation, by its fruitfulness: accordingly it is cultivated by its inhabitants, and no part of it lies idle. More-

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[1] Frederick C. Grant, *The Economic Background of the Bible*, (London, 1926), p. 42.

[2] *The Jewish War*, iii, 4.

over, the cities lie here very thick, and the very many villages there are here, are everywhere so full of people, by the richness of their soil that the very least of them contained above fifteen thousand inhabitants." [3]

How much capital was accumulated in Jerusalem and other cities is hard to determine. Herod was able to make munificent bequests in his will; and the Temple, which was a place of deposit for private funds as well as an ecclesiastical treasury, seems at times to have contained large sums of money. On the whole, Jewish wealth was small compared with that of modern America, but there was inequality enough according to contemporary standards: rich and poor are side by side in the pages of the Gospels as in the Psalms and the Wisdom Books.

For the people as a whole, taxation was the great burden. With the coming of the Romans, a governmental tax was imposed in addition to the ecclesiastical taxes, which, in the generations immediately before the days of Jesus, had been for both government and church. The exact amount of the Roman tax can not now be determined. In Jesus's manhood it was sufficiently burdensome that the Jews appealed to the emperor for relief. At times the taxes may have been as high as a third or fourth of the peasant's crop; and there were always different kinds of taxes, customs-duties, highway tolls and poll taxes. The enrollment for which Joseph took his betrothed

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[3] *The Jewish War*, iii, 3.

to Bethlehem was perhaps the first formal census by the Roman government; the second, fourteen years later, we know to have been for taxation purposes.

Hateful as the Roman taxes must have been because they were assessed by an alien power, they were not nearly so burdensome in amount as the ecclesiastical dues collected by the church authorities. Of these the principal were (1) first-fruits of grain, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and honey; (2) about two per cent of each harvest; (3) tithes of the products of the soil; (4) the first-born of animals; (5) redemption money for the first-born child, amounting to about two weeks' wages for a Jewish laborer; (6) the annual half-shekel tax for the Temple (only about twenty-five or thirty cents of our money). In addition to these, which are only the principal taxes, there were dues for the local synagogues and offerings for the poor and for schools.

The sum total of such taxation must have been intolerable; Doctor Grant estimates Roman and ecclesiastical taxes as equaling thirty to forty per cent, or even more, of the income of the Jewish people. Those who know the arts of the modern tax dodger, in Europe as well as America, will imagine that many of these exactions were little heeded; but at the best the burden was enormous.

By the method of collection the Roman government added to the woes of the people. Taxes were sold to the highest bidder, who might get what he could for himself above the government's minimum.

The taxgatherers, or publicans, were notoriously dishonest. When Zaccheus, under the spell of Jesus, offered to repay four-fold those whom he had cheated, he was possibly thinking of the percentage by which he had increased the taxes which he collected. At that his estimate was doubtless conservative.

If we ask about business in Palestine in the first century A.D., we remember first that the Jews were in the stream of Hellenistic life whether they liked it or not. Schürer listed foreign words used in Palestine during the three centuries before Christ, and noticed that in terms of trade and industry "the influence of Hellenism made itself the most forcibly noticeable." [4] The coinage system was partly what he calls "Phœnician-Hellenistic" and partly Greek or Roman. Among articles of trade with foreign names he lists especially provisions, clothing and furniture. Babylonian sauce; Median beer; Edomite vinegar; Egyptian fish, mustard, beans and lentils; Bithynian cheese; Greek pumpkins; Greek and Roman hyssop; Spanish kolias (a kind of tunny-fish) are the principal articles of foreign foods. Of garments may be mentioned Indian linen and cotton fabrics, Cicilian haircloth and Laodicean sandals. Among domestic utensils whose names are derived from the Greeks and Romans were benches, armchairs, curtains, Corinthian candlesticks, plates, bowls and table-cloths.

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[4] *The Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ,* Second edition, trans. by John Macpherson (N. Y., n. d.), II, i, p. 37.

This shows that Judaism, for all its wall of exclusion against the Gentile, had yielded to some extent to the allurements of Grecian and Roman fashions. It indicates also some of the articles for which the Jew exchanged his oil, wine, salt and fish. How extensive Jewish trade with the outside world really was we can not now determine. Jerusalem, by its very situation and by its large number of non-producing citizens engaged about the Temple, must always have had recourse to trading. In addition, the pilgrims who came up to the great festivals doubtless added to the wealth of the city, as modern tourist trade does to European cities, although a devout Jew would, of course, not be comparable in spending power to American millionaires. Sir George Adam Smith thinks that the intercourse of Jerusalem merchants with pilgrims from other lands would also have resulted, in the Greek period, in establishing Jewish agents and correspondents abroad.

Jesus spoke in his parables of great estates worked by slaves and managed by stewards (cf. Luke 16: 1-8). There were also laborers who worked for hire, as is attested by the story about the workmen who remained in the market-place because no one had hired them (Matt. 20:1-15). There was, then, a form of capitalistic agriculture known to Palestine of the first century, A.D.

Throughout Jewish history we hear little of manufacture. The strictly necessary trades, those of the carpenter, the mason, the tent-maker, the potter, and the like, were maintained of course. Jesus himself

was a carpenter and Paul learned the trade of a tent-maker. But artisans supplied the local community; there was little manufacture of articles for sale. The Jews traded in the products of the field or the money they had made as middle-men.

Aside from the Temple, which served as a national and private depositary, we have references in Jesus's parables to bankers who gave interest on money left with them. Whether these men carried on regular banking business or confined themselves to the profitable work of exchanging foreign coins for currency which was legal tender in Palestine, we do not know. It seems probable, however, that they lent money for business enterprises.

The translation of ancient words into modern terms must not deceive us as to the extent of Palestinian riches in the first century A.D. Modern scholars are inclined to emphasize the poverty of the Jews. There seems to be good evidence that the country was overpopulated, which would add to the misery of burdensome taxation. The people as a whole lived simple, even meager lives. A typical rich man of Jesus's parable had only wealth that he could gather into barns (Luke 12:18), and the unjust steward changed notes made out to his master promising payment in kind (Luke 16:6-7).

Although favored by the Law so far as ecclesiastical taxes were concerned, since these regulations came down from simple pastoral and agricultural times, yet business necessarily suffered from the common poverty. The axiom which Continental

financiers are learning so slowly to-day, that sellers must have buyers able to buy, held true in Palestine. Moreover, there were heavy burdens laid upon Jewish business.

Religious fetters bound the Jewish merchant to a simple alternative: he must restrict his trade to Jews or he must give up hope of keeping the Law. Even the first alternative would not save him. For example, produce of the soil had to pay the tithe; but the dealer who bought from a landowner could not be sure that everything had been tithed. How then could he satisfy his conscience? One solution was for the dealer to pay a tenth of a tenth, or one-hundredth as a sort of tithe-insurance. But the increasing punctiliousness of Jewish leaders, made trade between any but the strictest Jews almost as suspect as trade between Jew and Gentile.

The laws requiring observance of the Sabbath were in themselves strict enough, but the rabbis had, for the sake of clearness, considered various cognate cases, multitudinous correlaries, so that the Law as understood about the time of Jesus had manifold provisions. There were, for example, thirty-nine ways of breaking the Sabbath, most of these ways with several subdivisions. These divisions and subdivisions were in the interest of practicality; they were also one way of bringing the Law down to date: but they were no less hard on business. Added to the simple prohibition of work on the Sabbath, which is an embarrassment to modern Judaism, there were rabbinical refinements: a man must not talk about

business, look over a plantation to see its needs, hire workmen or cast up his accounts on the Sabbath. The hindrance to Jews engaged in commerce with Gentiles who cared nothing for the holy days is obvious enough.

More galling yet were distinctions between clean and unclean. A letter written about 200 B.C. containing an account of Jerusalem, describes the people going up and down the streets of the city, "who keep as far apart as possible, lest those bound by the rules of purity should touch anything unlawful." If this applied only to the very pious, yet there were restrictions enough to embarrass the most liberal layman. Special care must be taken lest the Jew partake, even in a remote way, in heathen idolatry and lest he violate the laws of clean and unclean. "An Israelite was forbidden to transact business with Gentiles, to lend to, or borrow anything from them, to make them payments, or receive payments from them during the three days preceding, and, according to R. Ismael, also the three days following any heathen festival." [5]

While at other times intercourse between Jew and Gentile was not forbidden, it was hedged about by such rules that any careful observance of them would have made international trade well-nigh impossible. For example, eating with Gentiles was impossible for the conscientious Jew; even Gentiles' houses were unclean. For Jews traveling abroad or for Gentiles

[5] Schürer, II, i, p. 58.

visiting Jerusalem for trade these prohibitions were commercially disastrous.

The extent to which a faithful observance of the niceties of the Law might have paralyzed trade can be seen from the prohibition against wood cut from a heathen grove dedicated to an idol. If a weaver's shuttle were made from this wood, the stuff woven was unclean; and garments made only partly from this cloth were also unclean. The difficulty of ascertaining the ceremonial purity of merchandise in a world where such groves were very frequent, for ornamental as well as religious purposes, is plain enough.

The Law was, of course, not kept by all the people. Opinions varied as to how far a good Jew could go in accommodating the Law to exigencies. Between the publican, who threw over respectability for money, and the Pharisee who tithed the smallest herbs in his garden, there were gradations of loyalty. Some differences in strictness is to be noted between Judea and Galilee. It would be easier to keep the Law in the stronghold of Judaism, the City of David, than in "Galilee of the Gentiles." The northern province had much of the character of a pioneer state; even the language was marked by a brogue (Matt. 26:73). If we admire Peter for his brave breaking of Hebrew custom when he ate with Gentiles at Joppa, we must remember that he was a Galilean. If Paul rebuked Peter for wavering in his attitude toward the Gentiles (Gal. 2:11-14), it is to be re-

membered that Paul was born in a Greek town out of Palestine altogether.

In actual life, the majority of men could not have hoped, and perhaps did not care, to keep the Law. The "business man" would doubtless sacrifice a possible reputation for unusual piety for the sake of profit. He might respect and applaud the Pharisee without attempting to imitate him. But the Pharisee was not satisfied with respect. To him the essence of religion was in observance both of the written and of the unwritten Law, and this observance he would require of laymen as well as priests. With a proselyting zeal on which Jesus made caustic comment, the Pharisee tried to read out of Judaism all who would not join in the exclusiveness which was of the essence of Pharisaic religion.

Where in this conflict concerning religion, a conflict which vitally affected the Jews' commerce not only with Gentiles but with his fellow-Jews, are we to place Jesus? He was from a poor man's home and was himself an artisan. To what extent did he understand the nature of the commercial civilization rapidly engulfing his countrymen? And what did he think about it?

CHAPTER VIII

JESUS OF NAZARETH

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In his highly colored "Life of Christ" which had such large and in many ways undeserved vogue a few years ago, Papini stressed quite rightly the lowly conditions under which Jesus was born. Yet we must not exaggerate the poverty of Jesus's home. He lived as did the majority of his countrymen, and there is little reason to think of Jesus as belonging to any such stratum of society as that which we to-day call the "proletariat."

His cottage home in Nazareth was doubtless as comfortable as those of his fellow-townsmen. Dr. T. R. Glover has happily reconstructed Jesus's home life from his later parables [1]: the room with its mud walls, its shelf-like bed near the door, its one grease lamp, which gave light to all that were within the house. Money was scarce but not unknown; the child may well have watched his mother sweeping diligently for a lost coin and rejoicing with her neighbors when it was found.

According to Mark, Jesus, as well as Joseph, was a carpenter. Where houses are made of stone, Jesus would perhaps shape yokes and plows as well as

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[1] T. R. Glover, *The Jesus of History* (N. Y., 1917), chap. ii.

build the peasants' simple furniture; he might even have been a ship-builder in the Galilean fishing-towns. It is not necessary to assume that he was a contractor, but we must not be confused by modern analogies. As a carpenter in a small town he would be more alive to the petty business of the village and country-side than a laborer in the factory of a modern city.

There are some references in Jesus's teachings which reflect the occupation of his youth and young manhood. He warned against insecure foundations (Matt. 7:24-27). He took a pride in the work he had done. He had seen ill-fitting yokes gall the shoulders of his neighbors' oxen: "Take my yoke upon you . . ." he said, "for my yoke is easy. . . ." (Matt. 11:29,30). One of his parables mentions the operations of a farmer who plants a vineyard, and another refers to the reckless man who starts to build a watchtower in his field without having made careful estimates of the cost (Matt. 21:33, Luke 14:28-30).

In Galilee of the Gentiles, as well as in Jerusalem, Jesus would learn of business methods and aims. His knowledge of the ways of commerce is such as would be at the command of an intelligent observer and does not imply any personal participation in business. Yet we shall see that he shows a grasp of certain financial entanglements of his time that is far more than the shrewd guess of a day laborer.

From his own experience he might know the price of sparrows, the food of the poor, which were sold

two for a farthing or five for two farthings (Matt. 10:29; Luke 12:6). As a boy in Galilee he may have seen pearl-merchants on the alert for bargains in the bazaars or among traveling peddlers (Matt. 13: 45-46). But he knew also the ways of the borrower and lender. In his parable of the unjust steward he refers to the notes of the debtors setting forth their indebtedness in oil and wheat (Luke 16:5-7); and, condemning certain Pharisees, Jesus uses the very formula of a receipt: "Verily I say unto you, they have been paid in full" (Matt. 6:16).[2] Was it out of the bitter experience of his people with the courts that he advised settling disputes without litigation? (Luke 12:58-59).

Jesus's expression in regard to trading in the Temple courts suggests that his abrupt onslaught on the dealers in doves and oxen and upon the money-changers was because of their corrupt practices. Not only were unjust profits made upon sales of sacrificial animals to pilgrims who came up to the feasts, but the bankers charged exorbitant exchange for money lawful for offerings and for Temple taxes. What had been legitimate business was turned into downright theft (Mark 11:17).

When we ask what was Jesus's attitude toward business, we face conflicting interpretations adopted by his followers during the Christian centuries. Few notions have been more widespread than that Jesus

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[2] Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East.* New Edition. (London, 1922), pp. 110-112.

exalted poverty as an ideal. Great popularity was given to this by Francis of Assisi, a saint whom the modern world adores but dares not imitate.

In Jesus's life there is very little to support this theory. His sayings in regard to poverty will be noticed later, but his own practice is decisive. We do not need the support of papal and conciliar decisions, to prove that Jesus never adopted the theory of perfect poverty which doctrinaire reformers and ascetics have attributed to him. Fishermen and disciples doubtless retained their boats and nets as the Fourth Gospel suggests (21:3). The presence of a treasurer in the little band may be explained by the need for someone to keep funds gained by begging; but there is no record that alms were solicited, although entertainment was accepted when granted (Mark 6:10-11). Some of the little company's expenses seem to have been borne by rich friends (Luke 8:3).

Jesus did not spurn the company of the rich as ascetics are prone to do. His enemies called him "a gluttonous man and a winebibber" and twitted him with associating with notorious collectors of Roman taxes (Luke 7:34). The presence of Jesus at the dinner tables of the well-to-do has always been a stumbling-block for those who have adopted the ascetic interpretation of his life.

In the same way, there is little to support the modern theory that Jesus was a proletarian revolutionary, striking a blow for the economic freedom of his people. The sympathy of Jesus for his pov-

erty-stricken people can not be denied, but that he held any theory approximating that of modern opponents of individual property is unproven by the records at our hands. One instance will illustrate his practice. In Jericho, Jesus ate with Zaccheus, who was chief of the tax collectors of the district and whose riches were great enough to call for special remark from the evangelist. The impulsive publican stood up and announced dramatically that he would give half of his goods to the poor and would return four-fold any wrongful exactions that he had made (Luke 19:8). It is of course impossible to determine how far such a program was carried out or was intended, but Jesus responded warmly: "To-day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham" (19:9). It is safe to assume that the arrangement left Zaccheus with some property, and we can not suppose that Jesus knew so little of human nature as to take at face value the enthusiastic proposal of the little tax gatherer. As always, Jesus valued the intention of the heart and made allowances for the frailty of the flesh.

Jesus's attitude toward money is practically impossible for a modern to recover.[3] Our reverence for wealth makes his cavalier treatment of questions involving property seem almost sacrilegious; it is not surprising that men have attributed to him all sorts of visionary theories. It may be that his refusal to

[3] On Jesus's teaching about money, see especially, E. F. Scott, *The Ethical Teaching of Jesus,* (New York, 1924), chap. xiii.

help divide an estate was a prudent deference to the courts (Luke 12:3-15), but his casual advice to the rich young ruler to give away what he had is breath-taking to our business-seasoned minds (Luke 8: 22). That Jesus accepted the gifts of rich friends (Luke 8:3) is itself contrary to modern ideas both of propriety and of economics. The fact is suggestive of his appraisal of money as only for use; it is in entire harmony with his basic principle, that the life is more than meat and the body than raiment (Matt. 6:25).

For selfish wealth Jesus had only the bitterest words. The man who amassed property Jesus spoke of pityingly as a fool (Luke 12:20); and the rich man at whose door Lazarus starved was consigned to hell (Luke 16:19-31). Jesus's attack upon Pharisaic leaders was partly because of their oppression of the poor; they loved money (Luke 16: 14) and were at the old trick of foreclosing on widows' houses (Mark 12:40).

Unquestionably, Jesus considered wealth a moral danger. It dulls the mind of man until he is liable to think that there is nothing worth while but the goods with which he can fill his barns. It opens chasms between men and their brethren which are realized only when they are projected into eternity (Luke 16:26). Wealth could, indeed, be used to heal breaches between men, to make peace (Luke 16-9); but there is little hope of this. Man can not serve God and Mammon (Luke 16:13), and may gain the whole world and lose his own soul (Mark 8:36). We

weaken the force of Jesus's great hyperbole, "It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:25). There is no need to emasculate the figure of speech, for Jesus says emphatically that a rich man can be saved by the grace of God; but he implies that it will take just that (10:27).

With all Jesus's fear of wealth as a moral danger, he took, on religious grounds, of course, a position which coincided with that of business men harassed by restrictions of the Law. I refer to his attitude toward the strict observances of the pious. It is unnecessary to go into the controversy concerning the real nature of the conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees.[4] Whether he understood their deepest motives, whether he justly appraised them as a whole does not matter here; the main point is that he refused to accept legal punctilios as necessarily binding.

He healed on the Sabbath, and justified himself by appealing to the conscience of his hearers (Mark 3:1-6). When his disciples walked through the grain fields on the Sabbath, plucking the ears of wheat and rubbing them in their hands, Jesus defended them on the grounds of expediency (Mark 2:23-28). His onslaughts on the "hypocrites" would have been

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[4] Those who are interested may see a favorable account of the Pharisees in R. Travers Herford, *The Pharisees* (New York, 1924). The best short discussion of Jesus's relation to the Law is in Harvie Branscomb, *Jesus and the Law of Moses* (New York, 1930).

welcomed, not only by peasants who knew not the Law, but by Jews who were favorable to a greater degree of intimacy with Gentiles. It has been too often overlooked that the ready response of publicans to his appeal may have originated partly in a feeling that this new teacher had as little regard for technical restrictions as they themselves.

This is not to say that Jesus favored violation of traditional prescriptions for the sake of business; nothing could have been farther from his thoughts. But it is to say that in his attitude toward some of the restrictions imposed by the Pharisees he was on the side of the "liberals." While Jesus himself may not have contemplated the complete break with Judaism which Paul advocated, a student of the Gospels must admit that his teachings were such as to make the later interpretations of the great Apostle for the Gentiles seem very logical.

There is some evidence, too, that Jesus sympathized with certain aspects of business which found little favor among his stricter fellow-countrymen. He makes it plain, for example, that he admired the adventurous spirit of those servants who traded with their lord's money and returned him increase on their investments (Luke 19:12-27). His opponents, too, are sometimes, at least, from the economically conservative class.

Ultra-conservatism in religion occasionally goes with the same quality in business, especially in very old communities. The Jewish tradesman who shrank from investments in long voyages, from casting his

bread upon the water, would be repelled by the eager young prophet, who bade men leave outworn truths for the gospel of a new world: "It was said to you of old time, but I say unto you." It may be that Jesus recognized this adventurous quality in those publicans toward whom he showed a kindness that scandalized his more orthodox contemporaries. Zaccheus had sinned, but the man who would venture in a despised business was also a man who would impulsively climb a tree to see the new teacher, invite him to dinner, and dramatically give away his goods in restitution.

Nevertheless, Jesus was aware of the corrupting alliances of business in his day. In his denunciation of the Pharisees, Jesus accused them of demanding obedience to laws which they themselves did not keep: "do not ye after their works; for they say, and do not" (Matt. 23:3). They strained out the gnat and swallowed the camel (23:24). By their hair-splitting definitions, the lawyers laid upon men heavy demands which they themselves had no intention of keeping (Luke 11:46). The evidence indicates that some leaders talked much of Jewish exclusiveness and yet were themselves lax enough when business called. The alliance of formal religion and greed was not unknown in his day, but there was another business alliance equally evil, that between political and financial leaders.

When his opponents tried to trap him into taking a position which would either alienate the populace or lay him liable to prosecution for treason, he

countered with something far more than clever dialectic. The opponents, representative of the dominant groups of the capital, asked him point blank whether Jews should pay Roman taxes. To answer "No" was to invite a charge of treason. On the other hand, the populace were, as usual, patriotic; they resented the taxation of an alien power and cheered the leaders who denounced the conqueror. To admit the justice of this taxation was to step forever beyond the pale of popular favor. Indeed, Jesus himself would naturally share his people's resentment of unjust taxes assessed and collected by men who wrested the last farthing from the poor for their personal profit. It was a dilemma conceived in the shrewd minds of men determined to rid themselves of a popular leader who threatened their vested interests as well as their religious dominance.

Among the men who pressed Jesus for an answer were representatives of the class which was growing rich off trade made possible by the government of Rome; for that government with all its evils had built roads, overthrown pirates, established uniform duties and in every way promoted trade. The commercial classes, therefore, however much they might talk of patriotism and religion, profited by this alien domination. To the question concerning taxation Jesus, therefore, replied by a seemingly innocent request for a Roman coin in which tax payments could be lawfully made. An unsuspecting opponent produced the coin, and Jesus prepared for his answer by forcing the questioners themselves to remark on

the image of Caesar with which the money was stamped. Then he replied with withering sarcasm in one terse, blistering sentence. But we can not understand his meaning unless we paraphrase. This is in substance what he said: "You who talk of patriotism have your pockets filled with money which comes to you from Roman trade. The price of your prosperity is Roman taxes. Why hypocritically complain of double taxation? At the very time that you are trying to make the people believe that you are Jewish patriots, your pockets are full of profits made by the very domination that you pretend to hate. If you are Jews, pay your temple taxes as a religious duty. If you are profiting by the Roman system, have the decency to pay Roman taxes without grumbling" (Mark 12:17).

Whatever his admiration for the spirit of adventure which animated the new business of Galilee, Jesus could not forget the suffering peasants who mortgaged their lands to pay double taxes, Jewish and Roman, ruthlessly exacted by unscrupulous tax-gatherers. He saw the unholy alliance so often made between national leaders and those who profit by a friendly government. Here again was the old danger of wealth, and the glamor of business faded in the drab sordidness of greed and callous manipulation.

When we try to assess the attitude of Jesus toward business, we must not overlook the influences of the new business upon a Galilean youth. A balanced mind would be impressed by the progressive spirit

of men who risked their present good for future profits, by the adventurousness of those who came bearing their goods from afar. Here was romance as there has always been romance in the merchant adventurers. We look back upon the traders who breasted the storms of unknown seas to trade with the Indies, as future generations will read of the adventures of Henry Ford, of the railroad builders, of the experimenters in the laboratories of our great corporations. I can not see in Jesus any sentimental sighing for the lost simplicities of the desert; he was not one to cry: "To your tents, O Israel."

But we must not for one moment imagine that he was reconciled to the practices of Jewish business. Against the patent dishonesty of the traders he offered not only words but lashes from the very cords that had tied up their merchandise (John 2:15); and more important still, he divined the alliance between political and religious leaders and business. The tax-gatherers were better men than those who sold their people for silver.

If we are asked what Jesus himself advocated as a practical program, we must reply that he did not favor any attempt to throw off the Roman yoke; he saw that this was impossible. His solution was for Judaism to forsake the impossible ideal of a politically dominant nation and to achieve the place designed for her as the religious leader of mankind. His anger at the leaders was not for their acceptance of Roman domination but for their profiteering while they bought their leadership with a pretence at

opposition to Rome. If they felt so keenly the suffering of their people, they might at least have refused to make money out of the cause of that suffering.

In the last analysis, Jesus's attitude toward business is very similar to that of the sages. He assesses one's economic status entirely in relation to what we should call human personality. The prayer of the wise man in Proverbs might have been that of Jesus, save that he saw more deeply into the causes and conditions of man's happiness. Business that hurt man's inner life was to him evil; his word for the man who allowed it was the sages' word, "Thou fool." Only one thing counted, and the world was well lost for that. What profit to gain the world and lose one's real life?

CHAPTER IX

FROM JEW TO GENTILE

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FROM JEW TO GENTILE

To TRACE the change by which the followers of Jesus were transformed from a small Jewish sect to an international religious movement is also to follow the disappearance of restrictions which surrounded the Jewish business man. Some understanding of this great change must precede any further consideration of the relation of the New Testament to business.

After the resurrection of Jesus, a little company of disciples and believers remained in Jerusalem participating in the religious practices of their fellow-Jews and differing from them mainly in their allegiance to the risen Jesus as the Messiah, the Christ of the Jews. They tried to dispose of monetary problems by voluntarily pooling their resources for the common good. There is no evidence that this was an attempt at communism, as we understand the term; convenience, not economic theory, constrained them. That there were property holders among them is evidenced by the actions of Barnabas, who sold a field that he owned, probably in Cyprus, and gave the price to the common fund (Acts 4:36-37), and of Ananias and Sapphira, who sought to gain credit for similar generosity without too much loss to them-

selves (5:1-11). The administration of this money for the good of all involved the apostles in so much difficulty that they later appointed officers to disburse the funds (6:1-6).

The first division in the little company came up over alleged discrimination in charity against the widows of Grecian Jews, and further difficulty was soon to arise over relations, not with Grecian Jews, but with Greeks and other Gentiles. While allowing in theory Peter's break with the law of clean and unclean, there seems to have continued in Jerusalem a party of Christian Jews who kept the Law as their fathers had kept it, although after a more liberal fashion than that of the very pious. Something of the practice of this group may be indicated.

If the Epistle of James be taken as reflecting Palestinian Judaism, then we may describe the life and opinions of the Christians who remained good Jews even while they had fellowship with those who had gone out to evangelize the Gentiles. While the denunciation of the rich in this epistle may be more or less conventional, there would seem to have been some rich men in the Jewish-Christian assemblies in Palestine; there may have been among them traders who traveled from city to city (4:13). On the whole, however, the community was possibly of the same class as its leader, James.

In the epistle is preserved the general attitude of the wisdom books toward the rich. No greater respect is to be paid the rich than the poor (2:1-4). Charity

is especially enjoined (1:27; 2:15). The poor are congratulated because theirs is a high estate (1:9), and the rich are condemned for their oppressions (5:1-6). The writer does not blame the Jew who proposes to go away to trade in some other city (does he mean Gentile cities?); he only warns against pride: "Come now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into this city, and spend a year there, and trade, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. What is your life? For ye are a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall both live, and do this or that" (4:13-15).

But the future of Christianity was not in Palestine but in the great world outside. It will be profitable to note the steps by which followers of Jesus broke down the barriers which separated Jew from Gentile. The first step was taken by the Galilean, Peter. Lodging at Joppa with one Simon, a tanner, Peter lay down in the cool of the day on the flat roof which served as an out-door porch to await his dinner. Falling asleep in full view of the harbor, he dreamed that he saw a sail full of "fourfooted beasts and creeping things of the earth and birds of the heaven." A voice said: "Rise, Peter, kill and eat." The fisherman answered like a good Jew: "Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common and unclean." The voice responded with words which were a very Magna Charta of Chris-

tian liberty: "What God hath cleansed, make not thou common" (Acts 10:9-16).

At the conclusion of Peter's dream, he went down to meet messengers from an Italian centurion, Cornelius, who invited him to his house. Peter went, explaining later to Cornelius that the vision had prepared him; and the result of the visit was the conversion of the centurion and his companions. On his return to Jerusalem, Peter was taken to task for entering the house of a Gentile and eating with him; but Peter justified himself by telling of the dream, and the apostles and brethren concurred (11:1-18).

It would seem that this incident might have settled the question as to the right of Christians to associate with Gentiles, but it did not. With the entry of Saul of Tarsus into the field, disputes arose again. There is no necessity to trace here the course of this controversy, important as it was for the future relations of Christians to the world of Gentile business; but it is worth recording that some of the brethren at Jerusalem bitterly opposed the breaking down of the barriers and even for a time persuaded Peter to change his attitude (Gal. 2:11-12).

From the beginning of his ministry, Paul was the great advocate of the Gentiles; he fought for their admission on the best possible terms into the Christian community; and he himself carried the gospel to strategical centers throughout almost the entire Mediterranean world. Some knowledge of his own cultural and economic backgrounds is necessary.

Paul was born in Tarsus of Cilicia, a city which stood some ten miles from the sea in the plain between the Taurus mountains and the coast. It was a center of Greek learning, and from this fact much has been deduced or imagined about the early life of the apostle. It would be more to the point to remember that Tarsus was a natural center of trade and travel. Paul's contact with Greek literature and philosophy may have been small, but he must have seen the caravans that came down through the Cilician gates from the East and the ships which came up the river bearing the products of Mediterranean ports to Tarsus.

Sir William Ramsay insists that in Tarsus, more than in any other Hellenistic city, there was a blending of the Greek and Asiatic spirits. "In others the Greek spirit, which was always anti-semitic, was too strong and too resolutely bent on attaining supremacy and crushing out all opposition. In Tarsus the Greek qualities and powers were used and guided by a society which was, on the whole, more Asiatic in character." [1]

Of this city, a commercial as well as an intellectual capital, Saul was a citizen. To the modern reader the fact of citizenship seems inherent in the casual fact of residence, but this was not true in the ancient world. To be a citizen of an ancient city and especially to hold citizenship in the Empire meant to be in a class above that of the ordinary resident. Many

[1] *The Cities of St. Paul.* (Lectures delivered in 1907), p. 89.

have supposed that Saul's citizenship proves that his father or some more remote kinsman had rendered special service to the city or to the Empire and had been elevated therefor. We know now that only occasionally was an individual thus raised, and that a Jew could not have accepted citizenship in any but a group of his fellow-countrymen without relinquishing his religion. Citizens of an ancient city of the Roman Empire were associated in "tribes," each of which had its own ceremonies and rites. These rites were of a religious character and naturally could not have been participated in by Jews jealous of their freedom from idolatry. Saul, or Paul, was by birth a member of one of these tribes, one made up of Jews, some of whom he may have mentioned in Romans 16:7-15, where he speaks of his "kinsmen," an expression ordinarily used of fellow-citizens.

We can not argue then that Paul must have been of a family so prominent or wealthy as to be raised to Roman citizenship, but the fact of citizenship does imply some superior standing in the community. There are other reasons for thinking that Paul's family was not of the lowest status. Professor Deissmann thinks that Paul belonged to the middle class, since he worked at a trade. This would be consistent with the possession of some means in later life, and there are reasons for believing that when Paul went to Rome he had some independent means. At least he had some companions on the voyage whose ex-

penses he probably paid, and he lived for two years in Rome in his own hired house (Acts 28:30).

Although Paul himself was an artisan, not a merchant, it is important that he belonged by birth to a tribe of Jewish citizens of the Empire, many of whom doubtless engaged in trade. Thus he had an economic background which is consistent with his later attempt to break down the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile. His economic environment would be such as to make him thoroughly familiar with the obstacles which the Law set up for the Jew who would live and work in Gentile lands. That he reacted at first toward a stricter interpretation of that Law, going to Jerusalem to study under one of the great masters of the Pharisees and becoming a zealot himself, only proves that the problem was clearly in his mind.[2] His later insistence upon freedom of relations between Jew and Gentile might even be taken as testimony that his early environment pushed him in that direction, and that he had resisted only by violent measures: he had found it hard to kick against the pricks.

The well-known facts of Paul's conversion and early days as a Christian need not be retold. At the very beginning of his active ministry we find him a champion of the Gentiles and their right to be admitted into the fellowship without first having

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[2] For an interesting discussion of Paul's early attitude toward the Law, see Branscomb, *Jesus and the Law of Moses*, pp. 274-279.

become Jews. In this controversy, Paul withstood Peter to his face because the latter had wavered in his earlier freedom of intercourse with non-Jews (Gal. 2:11-12). At the famous Council of Jerusalem, Paul secured comparatively easy terms, not including circumcision, on which Gentiles might be admitted to Christianity (Gal. 2:1-10); and throughout his ministry he was the defender of the conception of a world-religion.

Nevertheless, in the oversight of his churches, Paul found it necessary to guard against such intercourse with the heathen as endangered Christian principles. Indeed, at times ordinary business must have been interfered with almost as disastrously as under the old Law. But the basis was different. The Jew was separated by barriers which forever cut him off from any but proselytes; the Christian separated himself only from those who were idolaters or whose morals might contaminate. The main point must be remembered: Paul's primary principle assumed the equality of Jew and Gentile in the Church; the old barrier of race was broken down.

If we turn to the field in which Paul labored, we shall see that it lay among people of similar experience and background as the apostle. There were Jewish colonies in all the great cities and in all the important trading posts of the Empire. According to the estimates of the ancients, the Jews made up approximately one-seventh of the population of the Roman Empire. What this means may be grasped by remembering that, in the United States, when

the Great War broke out, the Jews numbered less than one-thirtieth of the total population. Ancient statistics are notoriously unreliable, but in this instance they testify to the large number of Jews, including, of course, proselytes, in the Empire.

So important were the Jews that they were granted numerous privileges and exemptions not usually awarded to racial groups. They were, for example, not pressed as soldiers; they were not compelled to appear in a court of law on the Sabbath; when a public distribution of corn took place upon the Sabbath, their share was delivered to them on the following day. That such exemptions should be granted to a race uniformly despised by Greeks and Romans is evidence of the commercial and financial importance of the Jewish settlers.

The Jews of the Dispersion, as they were called, seem to have taken part in many occupations. There were artisans, like Paul and his good friends, Aquila and Priscilla. Others were small tradesmen, like Dorcas, the seller of purple. Still others traded in money instead of goods. As bankers and moneylenders they had already established a reputation in the Mediterranean world; a letter has been found in which an Alexandrian merchant wrote to a friend, August 4, 41 A.D., bidding him "beware of the Jews."

It was to these Jewish settlements that Paul went first, turning from them to the Gentiles when his own people did not receive his message. The great barrier of race and creed had been broken down;

Jew and Gentile could meet together in a common faith. But there were practical difficulties to be faced, if the little company of churches were not to be swallowed up in paganism. What can we learn of the attitude of Paul and of the early church toward business?

CHAPTER X

THE EARLY CHURCH (I)

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The centers in which Paul worked as a missionary were important cities of the Roman Empire. Professor Deissmann remarks that "since the modernization of the means of communication in the Mediterranean world almost all the important places visited by Paul can be reached either by steamer or railway or by both means of communication." [1] This means that Paul worked along what were in his day and are in ours the main routes of the Mediterranean world.

Another great New Testament scholar, Sir William Ramsay, has elaborated a charming thesis on the statesmanship of Paul. According to this, Paul deliberately aimed at the evangelization of the Roman Empire, and therefore chose as his principal points of attack the capitals of the Roman provinces. It is not necessary here either to defend or to oppose this theory; the evidence is sufficient to make it probable that Paul had some such deliberate plan. He certainly chose to labor in commercial cities which lay along the main arteries of travel in the Empire.

A glance at a map of the world in Paul's time

[1] *Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History.* Second edition. (London, 1926), p. 228.

will show the strategic location of the churches which he founded. Ephesus was the capital of the Roman province of Asia. Although its harbor was kept open only by constant engineering work and seems even in Paul's times to have become difficult of entry (Acts 20:15-16), yet Ephesus was an important trading center as late as the third century of our era. It was one of the principal stations on the main road between the East and Rome, and much of the trade of the East passed that way.

Corinth was given over primarily to transportation; ships landed there and their cargoes were carried across the narrow isthmus, thereby saving the long and sometimes dangerous journey around the Archipelago. Small ships were carried bodily across the isthmus on rails. Corinth was the second important post on the East-West road to Rome and was consequently filled at all times with travelers and traders.

Smaller cities, like Philippi, also had importance as centers of industry and trade. Philippi, for example, was on the principal land-route from the East to the West; and one of Paul's first converts there was Lydia, a merchant from Thyatira (Acts 16:14-15, 40). Even of the comparatively unimportant places in southern Asia Minor which Paul visited on his so-called "first missionary journey," Lystra, Derbe, and Iconium, at least one was no mean city commercially.

When we trace Paul's journeys and consider the churches which he founded, we can not but mark

the connection of the early Church with the commercial cities of the Roman Empire. Here the Jews were to be found following their occupations as merchants and bankers, and here the apostle found a fertile field for his preaching among Gentiles who had been attracted by the high, ethical monotheism of Judaism. Only in one city of importance did Paul's message seem to fall upon barren ground: that was Athens, a capital of the world of ideas not of the world of trade.

What kind of people were Paul's converts? He speaks of "the deep poverty" of the churches of Macedonia (II Cor. 8:2); and his directions to the churches of Galatia and Corinth, to collect a sum of money each week, would suggest that the amounts given were very small (I Cor. 16:1-2). On the other hand, Philemon must have been a man of some means, and such men as Gaius and Erastus of Corinth could hardly have been poverty-stricken (Rom. 16:23). It is unnecessary to pile up evidence to support the theory generally accepted to-day, that most of Paul's converts were from the lower and middle classes. This leaves room for certain converts of position and wealth.

Converts from the lower and middle classes in commercial cities would naturally include slaves, laborers, artisans and small tradesmen. The peculiar problems which their occupations would present to such Christians appear again and again in Paul's letters. A glance at some of his exhortations to his followers and at the situations which called forth

this advice will acquaint us with important facts relative to the life of these early Christians.

Slavery is accepted as a fact of economic life by Paul and his co-workers; there is no argument about whether it is right or wrong. Slaves are bidden to be obedient to their masters (Col. 3:22), while masters are to be just to their slaves (4:1). The little letter to Philemon is an excellent example of the New Testament attitude toward slavery.

From far-away Phrygia, a slave, Onesimus, had run away from his Christian master, Philemon. But in Rome the runaway had suffered the hardships that came upon outcasts everywhere, and at last he seems to have sought out his master's friend and Christian guide, Paul. After having used his services for a while, Paul sent Onesimus back to his master with a letter, the letter to Philemon. There is nothing said of emancipation, but Paul urges his friend in Phrygia to receive back Onesimus, now a Christian also, not as a returned slave but as a brother. If Onesimus had stolen anything, Paul himself would repay if necessary; only Philemon might remember that he, in turn, owed Paul his very soul.

Here is no social program leading toward the freedom of slaves in the Roman world. Such a program would have led to revolution for which neither masters nor slaves were ready. But there was an alteration in the mutual relations of masters and slaves which meant the eventual undermining of the whole servile system. When masters regarded their slaves as brothers beloved and had Christian fellowship with them, the old, horrible system was doomed.

We know that, later at least, slaves and masters met in the same Christian service; and sometimes the office-bearers of the church were men of servile rank. Whatever our own convictions, the facts of Paul's attitude and method are plain. He did not attack the system, but he undermined it by trying to substitute the Christian for the pagan motive.

Inevitably, Christianity affected men's occupations. At Ephesus, the preaching of the gospel seriously crippled the business of the silversmiths, who made little images of the goddess, Diana (Acts 19:23-27). It is obvious that a Christian would not feel free to engage in such employment, although it is not clear from the speech of Demetrius, the silversmith, recorded in Acts 19:24 ff., whether the new religion affected only purchasers of images or also workingmen employed in their manufacture.

It was Paul's principle that every man should abide in the same calling in which he was when he became a Christian (I Cor. 7:20), but there had to be many exceptions. Some callings were obviously unsuited for those who professed Christ. While we cannot point to instances occurring in Pauline times, we have evidence from a later period of the way in which strict Christians abhorred many seemingly innocent trades. About a century and a quarter after Paul's death, Tertullian forbade Christians all occupations even remotely connected with idolatry.

Naturally, the making of idols was forbidden;[2] but also plasterers, painters, masons, bronze-workers, and carpenters were cautioned to do no work con-

[2] Tertullian, *On Idolatry,* chap. iv.

nected with heathen worship. Tertullian very sensibly points out that there is plenty of work for these artisans besides that of the temples (chap. viii). He also considers teaching dangerous for the Christian, since there are heathen subjects to teach and heathen holidays to observe (chap. x). Dealing in frankincense, for example, is expressly forbidden, since the major use of this commodity is in sacrifices; but trade in general is suspect, because the motive is covetousness (chap. xi). Somewhat grudgingly, Tertullian admits, that, in spite of all this, there is some righteousness in business.

While the African's testimony does not tell us anything directly of conditions in the Christian churches of St. Paul, yet similar problems must have confronted Christians in the early days as well as a century later. Tertullian's warnings indicate that Christians were inclined to practice their trades and to engage in commerce with little regard to those niceties which the more scrupulous would have had them observe. In another place, Tertullian expressly states that Christians of the second century took part in the economic and social life of their heathen contemporaries. "So we sojourn with you in the world," he wrote in his *Apology*,[3] "abjuring neither forum, nor shambles, nor bath, nor booth, nor workshop, nor inn, nor weekly market, nor any other places of commerce. We sail with you, and fight with you, and till the ground with you; and in like manner we unite with you in your traffickings—even in

[3] Chap. xiii, Translations from *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*.

the various arts we make public property of our works for your benefit."

Paul was meeting the problem: how could Christians live in the midst of a pagan world? And, with all his liberality, Paul retained the Jewish solution, separation from the world. In his famous discussion about eating meat offered to idols (I Cor. 8), Paul insisted that idols are nothing and that one need not be concerned about them; but he advised careful abstinence from anything which would offend a weaker brother. It is the casual way in which Paul counsels separation for the sake of weaker brethren which betrays his own assumption: that isolation is the natural remedy. But isolation was not easy for business men. The Corinthians' dilemma concerning meat was not a matter of mere etiquette; their occupations, their means of living were involved.

In line with his other teaching, Paul forbade Christians to try cases in pagan courts (I Cor. 6: 1-8). This, too, must have been difficult for Christians in business; and, although the Apostle's reasons are good enough, one suspects that his advice came from his Jewish rather than from his Gentile training. The covetous, litigious, idolatrous world of Mediterranean business was full of danger for the Christian. To the Apostle the simplest solution was the time-honored one of his people, withdrawal from contamination.

How far Paul's advice was owing to an expectation of an imminent return of the Lord, one can not say. It is true that, especially in I. Thessalonians,

he warned his followers not to sleep "as do others," but to be watchful, since "the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night" (5:6, 2). But in his second letter he guarded against such construction of his earlier warning as would paralyze their ordinary life (chap. 2). Many scholars feel that Paul's own opinions changed during the course of his ministry. At any rate, in his later epistles there is little reference to the Second Coming.

The same tendency toward separation from the world appears elsewhere in the New Testament. An extreme instance is the hatred of the Book of Revelation for the great Roman politico-commercial power. Threatened persecution for little bands of Christians moved the author or compiler of that strange book to promise final overthrow of "Babylon, Mother of Harlots," and he did not fail to see the effect of such an event upon business. So closely was the Roman power identified with commerce that, in Revelation, along with nations and kings, the merchants of the earth mourn, for they are "waxed rich by the powers of her wantonness" (Rev. 18:3).

From Rome deliverance can come only through the miraculous interposition of Christ. The Apocalypse ends with the almost despairing prayer: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." That the hope needed renewing because of the passing of generations without the Great Appearance is evident from one of the latest documents to be incorporated into the New Testament. In II Peter, 3:9-10, we read: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some

count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward. . . . But the day of the Lord will come as a thief. . . ."

But aside from any motive of fear or hate, the early Christians were constantly reminded that they were "an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession" (I Peter 2:9), a third race, as they were to be called later. Their habitation was not here; in Paul's fine phrase, each little church was "a colony of heaven" (Phil. 3:20, Moffatt). As colonists there was no place for money-getting, for heaping up earthly possessions. The true Christian laid up treasures in heaven, where alone was his abiding city. In a treatise written a hundred years after Paul, there are lines setting forth the essential idea of renunciation as it persisted in the Christian Church. Later than any book of the New Testament, they but carry on the spirit of renunciation which was to find its highest expression in monasticism.

"He [the angel] says to me, 'You know that you who are the servants of God dwell in a strange land; for your city is far away from this one. If then,' he continues, 'you know your city in which you are to dwell, why do ye here provide lands, and make extensive preparations, and accumulate dwellings and useless buildings? . . . Have a care, therefore: as one living in a foreign city, make no further preparations for thyself than such merely as may be sufficient; and be ready, when the master of this city shall come to cast thee out for disobeying his

law, to leave his city, and depart to thine own, and to obey thine own law without being exposed to annoyance, but in great joy. . . . Instead of lands, therefore, buy afflicted souls, according as each one is able, and visit widows and orphans, and do not overlook them; and spend your wealth and all your preparations, which ye received from the Lord, upon such lands and houses.' " [4]

Such an attitude necessarily discouraged active participation in business, and moreover retarded the development of any philosophy or ethics of business. Whereas the proverbialists did not hesitate to include business advice among their moral and religious adages, the Christian who looked for a speedy end of the world or who regarded separation from his pagan neighbors as the supreme test of his religion would be indifferent to such mundane concerns. As yet few wise and few great were called. Here and there rich men were numbered among the new sect, and soon even members of the Imperial Court would be more or less secret adherents of the Judean heresy; but, on the whole, the Christians were of the artisan class. As such they could keep body and soul together with a minimum of pagan contagion, and so could be innocent of the great design to Christianize pagan business. The tendency toward renunciation would have, therefore, continued support among religious teachers.

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[4] *The Pastor of Hermas*, Similitude First. Trans. from *The Ante-Nicene Fathers.*

CHAPTER XI

THE EARLY CHURCH (II)

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If there was, in the early church, a strong tendency toward separation of the Christian from the world of ordinary affairs, there were also influences moving toward the realization of Christianity in the common walks of life.

In the first place, it was Paul, above all others, who broke down the partition between Jew and Gentile. By admitting Gentiles and Jews together into the new Christian communities and then by building churches almost, if not altogether, Gentile, he destroyed that exclusiveness which had so long been an economic barrier between the "chosen people" and the outside world. The controversy which Paul carried on with the "Judaizers," in which the Apostle contended for the freedom of a Christian man, must have had an effect even more far-reaching than he himself intended. However fine distinctions Paul himself may have made, the common man would see in his new freedom complete severance from the old distinctions of clean and unclean. This would be especially true among Gentiles who had no inherited Jewish scruples. If Paul taught that idols were nothing, the Christian merchant would be inclined to dismiss all scruples which interfered with business;

and concern for the tender consciences of "weak brethren" would give way to attempts to educate the overly-conscientious out of their inconvenient ideas.

Paul himself borrowed his terminology from the ordinary world of labor and business. The new Christian teaching was not in terms of the Temple and of rabbinical schools but of the market-place. Professor Deissmann has done good service in showing how Paul's language reflects the common speech of his day. A few examples will illustrate the extent to which Christian doctrine and ethics spoke the language of business.[1]

Paul wrote that he had "labored more abundantly" (I Cor. 15:10), using a phrase common to workmen who had turned out a pleasing amount of piece-work during the day. Writing to the Philippians (4:18), he uses the ordinary form of a receipt: he has their payment in full. Onesimus's debt to his master is assumed by Paul in the letter to Philemon: "if he hath wronged thee at all; or oweth thee aught, put that to mine account; I Paul write it with mine own hand. I will repay it" (vv. 18, 19). "I write it with mine own hand" formally acknowledges debt in good commercial style.

Not only in passing phrases but even in his formulation of what have been considered central doctrines, Paul borrows the language of business. The

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[1] See especially, Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*, pp. 312 ff.

great metaphor of ransom, "ye are bought with a price" (I Cor. 7:23), is taken from the practice of manumitting slaves who had bought their freedom by a ceremony involving fictitious purchase by a god. The slave, who had previously deposited his purchase price in the temple, was taken there by his master and sold to the god, the master receiving his price not from the slave directly but from the treasury of the god. Here is not theology but living metaphor taken from the market-places of the Mediterranean world.

The way in which the use of a term borrowed from the world of law or business may vitally affect one's doctrine is well illustrated by the word translated in our Bible "testament." In the Old Testament, the word is translated "covenant," and as we have seen carried something of the idea of contract. But is this the meaning in the New Testament? The evidence of the papyri seems to favor "will." What difference does it make? Simply this: either God enters into contract with his people, and the gospel is a proclamation of that two-sided agreement; or God merely proclaims his message, and it is ours to reject or accept, as heirs do the bequests of a will. Was the word in the New Testament borrowed from law or business? On the answer depends the color of our doctrines of God and grace, even of salvation itself.

Like Paul, the early Christian spoke this language of the market-place; for his patois was that Greek which was used for commerce throughout the Medi-

terranean world. To-day, as we read pages which have been uncovered from the sands of Egypt, papyri of this period, we visualize a world where men worried about their taxes, sought to mitigate the demands of money-lenders, complained of the crops, inquired anxiously the price of wheat, did all the things that men do in a world of buying and selling. And it was in this world that the early Christian lived, worked for his living, kept his small shop, or adventured for gain. The strictures of his teachers are in themselves evidence enough that many, by necessity or inclination, were compelled to seek some application of their Christianity to business.

It was remarked long ago, that early Christian teaching did not attempt to do away with rich and poor in the new religious community; the only effort was to promote charity and brotherly kindness on the part of all. The so-called communism of the Acts of the Apostles was not communism at all, but merely voluntary sacrifice for the sake of the brethren. Ananias and Sapphira were rebuked, not for keeping a portion of their possessions, but for lying about it. Throughout the early Church, giving was voluntary. The rich had received their wealth from the Lord; for this reason they should make friends with the mammon of unrighteousness.

If we look more closely at the teaching of Paul and his fellow-workers in the early Church, we shall see that they emphasized much which was both native to Hebrew ethic and also fitted for guidance of believers in the world of business.

At first glance, one misses the prophetic denunciation of dishonesty and oppression of the poor by the rich. The latter is found only in such passages as James 5:1-5, where the pen is that of James but the voice that of Amos: "Behold, the hire of the laborers who mowed your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth out: and the cries of them that reaped have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth." Evil practices in business are seldom mentioned, as one would expect, remembering that the early Christians were usually artisans rather than merchants. Paul lists "swindlers" along with thieves, drunkards and revilers,[2] and swindling would be the most common business vice of laborers and petty tradesmen.

A more pertinent economic lesson for poor Christians was in the tradition of Israel, that men should be independent. It was a matter of principle with Paul that every man should work, and he enforced this with severity. There was nothing said about the "dignity of labor," but the community was to be protected from idlers. "If any will not work, neither let him eat," was Paul's dictum to the Thessalonians (II Thess. 3:10): and he reminded them that he had required this before.

The lesson of economic independence Paul enforced not only by precept but by personal example. In the same chapter in which he demanded that a

[2] Cf. I Cor. 6:10. Deissmann thinks the word translated "extortioners" in RV should be "swindlers."

man work for his food, the apostle testified of his own habit: "neither did we eat bread for nought at any man's hand, but in labor and travail, working night and day, that we might not burden any of you" (II Thess. 3:8). In the speech to the elders at Miletus, as it is given in Acts (20:34-35), he spoke in similar terms of his own practice: "Ye yourselves know that these hands ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. In all things I gave you an example, that so laboring ye ought to help the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that he himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Paul's trade, tentmaking, stood him in good stead during his missionary journeys. He believed that he had a right to support from his churches (I Cor. 9:7-14); but, except in rare instances, he would not avail himself of such help. His course arose from a fear that his work might be handicapped by doubts as to his disinterestedness; but also from his belief in the Hebrew ideal of independence. The motto of his life might well be summed up in his own words: "Owe no man anything, save to love one another" (Romans 13:8).

Perhaps unwittingly Paul gave to his churches one of the best lessons in thrift that was ever received by any people. His principles have been employed by every organization since which has attempted to promote systematic saving, whether the goal was war loans or savings accounts. The occasion for this lesson from the apostle was the poverty

of the Church at Jerusalem and Paul's desire to do something to cement good feeling between Gentile and Palestinian Christians. To meet the need, he organized a collection among his churches for the church at Jerusalem.

The first problem was to secure gifts from poor people who had little beyond their living. To achieve this, the apostle devised a system of systematic, weekly giving: "Upon the first day of the week," he wrote to the Corinthians, "let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come" (I Cor. 16:2). Very little would probably have been gotten had the collection been taken at one time; only by laying up a little each week could any considerable amount have been given by laboring men none too thrifty at any time.

The methods which Paul used to stimulate giving are also of no mean order. He appealed subtly to the pride of the Corinthians. "For as touching the ministering to the saints," he wrote in his second letter, "it is superfluous for me to write to you: for I know your readiness, of which I glory on your behalf to them of Macedonia, that Achaia hath been prepared for a year past; and your zeal hath stirred up very many of them. But I have sent the brethren, that our glorying on your behalf may not be made void in this respect; that, even as I said, ye may be prepared: lest by any means, if there come with me any of Macedonia and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be put to shame in this confi-

dence" (II Cor. 9:1-4). He adds that he is sending some brethren ahead to make up the collection, so that the same might be ready of free will and not as extorted from unwilling givers.

To those interested in that self-adopted foster-child of modern science, the so-called "psychology of salesmanship," this passage is recommended for meditation and patient study. Paul reminded his followers of the collection, although such reminder was "superfluous." He had been bragging about them in Macedonia, telling his hearers there that Achaia had been ready for a year. Nevertheless, he was sending an advance agent or two to look after the matter, for it would be embarrassing indeed to him (not to say, to them), if he should happen to have some Macedonians with him when he came, to find that the collection was not completed.

Further evidence of Paul's understanding of the human mind when it is directed toward money-matters is found in his arrangement to carry the money to Jerusalem. "And when I arrive," he informed the Corinthians, "whomsoever ye shall approve, them will I send with letters to carry your bounty unto Jerusalem: and if it be meet for me to go also, they shall go with me" (I Cor. 16:3-4). The giver is to be allowed to present his own gift, a device which has increased many a collection. Thus, at one stroke, the apostle provided both for a larger offering and for immunity against any possible suspicion concerning his own disinterestedness.

The importance of this incident for the business

history of the early Christians has not, I think, been properly appreciated. It is in thorough harmony with the Hebrew ideal of making the community of the saints self-sufficient, collectively as well as individually. Moreover, it offered practical instruction in attaining personal independence. Whether or not Paul regarded it in this light, the effect was the same. The Christian artisan, who had been exhorted to owe no man anything, and who was required to work if he ate at a common table, was here given invaluable experience in a method of thrift. Whatever else of the apostolic teaching may have been lost, this has survived.

In another aspect, this collection is of importance in the early history of the Church. In the Old Testament, we have seen that there persisted a sense of group responsibility. Economic individualism, every man for himself, never dominated Hebrew ideals, whatever may have been true of their practice. Paul was true here to the spirit of the Law and of Jesus, when he bound his churches together in mutual aid. That this principle of social responsibility lived alongside the other requirement of personal independence is attested in the later history of the early Church. After apostolic times, the little communities of Christians felt bound not only to care for the sick and old, not only to require work from those able to work, but to furnish them work. The attitude of the early Church is best summarized by Harnack:

"It is beyond question, therefore, that a Christian brother could demand work from the church, and

that the church had to furnish him with work. What bound the churches together, then, was not merely the duty of supporting one another—that was simply the *ultima ratio*; it was the fact that they formed a guild of workers, in the sense that the churches had to provide work for a brother whenever he required it. This fact seems to me of great importance, from the social standpoint. The churches were also labor unions. . . . The Church did prove in this way a refuge for people in distress who were prepared to work. Its attractive power was consequently intensified, and from the economic standpoint we must attach very high value to a union which provided work for those who were able to work, and at the same time kept hunger from those who were unfit for any labour." [3]

Money was important to the early Christian, at least so far as his ideals were concerned, in that it gave him independence and the means with which to help his brethren. But, aside from this, money and money-making were deprecated as dangerous to one's character. The rich were likely to become like the Laodiceans, to whom the Spirit said: "thou sayest, I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art the wretched one and miserable and poor and blind and naked" (Rev. 3:17). Covetousness is included in almost every list of vices given by Paul and his fellow-

[3] *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity*, (New York and London, 1908), vol. ii, p. 176.

workers. That warning was needed is evidenced by the inclusion in the requirements for bishops and deacons given in I Timothy of cautions against loving money, being "greedy of filthy lucre" (3:3, 8).

We have here the position taken by the sages of the Old Testament and by Jesus: riches and the passion for gain are dangerous to a man's soul. In I Timothy, written possibly after the first wave of enthusiasm had passed and the tasks of organization and of pastoral oversight had become pressing, the conception of the risks of money-getting are set forth in classic language: "But they that are minded to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil: which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (I Tim. 6: 9-10).

In words that remind us of the famous prayer in Proverbs, the writer of I Timothy sets forth the economic ideal of the Christian man as simple subsistence: "But godliness with contentment is great gain: for we brought nothing into the world, for neither can we carry anything out; but having food and covering we shall be therewith content" (I Tim. 6:6-8). Here is that exaltation of mind and soul over body which prompted men to pray that they have neither "poverty nor riches" (Prov. 30:7-9) and that they be given their daily bread (Matt. 6:11); which moved the great Apostle to testify that he had

learned in every condition to be content (Phil. 4:11).

As in the Old Testament, so in the New, economic needs are not neglected. The later writers are perhaps not so mindful as was Jesus of the intimate relations of religion to man's ordinary and more prosaic interests: but they remembered to stress the ancient virtue of independence. Also, as in the Old Testament, men are reminded of their social responsibility; the community of believers is a body where each part needs the other (I Cor. 12:21). Finally, man's economic interests are subordinated to the needs of his mind and heart. Always the Christian teacher strives to free his hearers from the domination of "things"; life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that a man possesseth (Luke 12:15).

CHAPTER XII

CONCLUSION

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What business was in ancient Israel and in Roman Judea, what it was in the Græco-Roman world of the first century, and what the writers of the Bible thought about this phase of man's social activity, will have appeared, however sketchily, in the previous chapters. We come now to ask: "What value has all this for our own day?" For if we pretend that the Bible has any worth more than that of any other ancient tale, we must answer the question: "Wherein lies its pertinency for our generation?"

From our brief survey nothing should be clearer than that the Bible is not a code of business law, not a manual for the solving of all questions of modern finance and trade. "I could not be satisfied in this world of rapid changes," said a man recently, "if I did not find all the developments of our time foretold in the Old Testament." Surely a study of the Old Testament's teaching regarding interest would be sufficient to convince even this man that the writers of the Bible wrote for their own day and its problems. For us the worth of the Book is not in rules but in the principles by which righteous and faithful men met new conditions and tried to preserve certain great fundamental values.

Since we can not look to the eighth century before Christ, nor the first after Him, for detailed regulations for the conduct of modern business, have we then no help from the principles laid down in these ancient books? Have the basic assumptions upon which the great men of the Bible proceeded in criticizing the business of their day become obsolete by the changes of centuries?

We must not be deceived by easy generalizations. Business to-day is infinitely more complex than even in the first century, when stock-companies, banks and many of the features of modern finance had already become familiar. The control of a great corporation, for example, is no longer in the hands of one man or of one group of men. The stockholders and the management of one firm may have connections with other enterprises; they may be practically interdependent with industries from which they must draw raw material. The course that the firm pursues may be in part dependent upon political and financial conditions or even upon the weather of some country on the other side of the globe. The internal organization of a great business concern may be so complicated that an ordinary man cannot comprehend its ramifications. But does all this mean that the principles coming out of the relatively simple days of the Bible are invalid?

Perhaps we can answer the question easier if we take a simple illustration. Honesty is one of the fundamental ethical teachings of the Bible. In pre-exilic days, the merchant sold his wool or his oil or

his wine directly to the consumer; it was a face-to-face transaction. No one was involved but the buyer and the seller. To-day, merchandise may involve hundreds and thousands of individuals on its way from raw products to the ultimate buyer. Yet has the need of honesty disappeared? In reality, the growing intricacy of commercial transactions has made it all the more essential that everyone receive dollar for dollar. What was once required for conscience' sake is now necessary for self-preservation.

In truth, the simplicity of conditions under which the ethical principles of the Bible were worked out is one of the reasons for their continued validity. Rules aimed at minute regulation of financial transactions at any stage of social development become obsolete under new conditions. Only fundamentals which have to do with the relatively stable human factors survive. Men may buy from caravans or from chain stores, but mutual confidence is essential always.

As we must not be deceived by the complexity of modern business into disregarding principles evolved under simpler conditions, so we must not be unduly confused by the rapidity of change in our modern world. The revolution of industry and business that is still going on is transforming our social structure, but such revolutions have occurred before. In our study we have seen tribes out of the desert settle down to agricultural life, and we have watched them gradually assimilate the commercial civilization of their neighbors. These changes have

involved reorganization of government, of methods of living, even of ways of thinking. These have taken fifteen hundreds of years, whereas our world has been remade almost within our memory. Nevertheless, the older story may be of worth just because it mirrors the work of centuries instead of years.

When the motion picture of a running horse is thrown upon the screen, the succession of pictures is so rapid that the eye does not register details; but when the picture is slowed down, the manner of the horse's movements may be studied at ease. Just so, the essential accommodations required when man alters his methods of living or when he is crowded into narrower space by the pressure of population are to-day obscured by the very speed by which the changes occur. It is only on the screen of history that we can study similar transformations which took place over a period of hundreds or thousands of years. The centuries that intervened between the entry of nomadic tribes into Palestine and the formation of little Christian churches in the ghettos of Mediterranean cities gave time for prophets and teachers to study the essential problems of man's relations to his fellows in desert camps and in narrow city streets. In many ways, the Bible is a slow motion picture of social change.

If, then, in our present world, we seek guidance from the Bible as to the conduct of business, we must find it in those fundamental principles governing human relations which were worked out through long centuries by prophets, lawmakers, sages, apos-

tles and by Jesus himself. In the light of our brief study, what can we say of these basic principles?

In the first place, we can not fail to notice that religious teachers recognized the importance of man's economic life. A man must live. This is not to deny that under some circumstances the good man will choose to die; the supreme lesson of the Book is a cross. But for most the first necessity is the means of life. Against anyone, therefore, who takes away another's chance for a livelihood the prophets hurled their thunderbolts. The cloak of the debtor is sacrosanct, even from him who has honestly tried to render aid; for this is his life. In Jesus's parable of the rich man and Lazarus, it is evident that the rich man's sin was that he lived in plenty while his neighbor had nothing with which to support a wasting body. It is according to this principle that we must understand the emphasis upon charity in an age when the alleviation of poverty was better understood than means of prevention. For society, as for the individual, the rule was: "if any provideth not for his own, and specially his own household, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever" (I Tim. 5:8).

The moral effect of economic independence was understood well enough. The woes of the poor and the security of the rich are commonplaces. He who, like the ant, provides for the future can look forward to peace in his old age. Vice itself may come from the pressure of poverty (Prov. 30:9). The ideal of the prophets was never forgotten: each man should be able to live under his own vine and fig tree. So

the lawmakers attempted, if unsuccessfully, to prevent complete loss of a man's inheritance. Jesus taught his disciples to pray that they might not be harried by the dread of future want: "give us to-day our bread for the morrow" (Matt. 6:11, Moffatt).

Unquestionably, there is much in the Old Testament that teaches, "honesty is the best policy." Righteousness is rewarded with prosperity and evil with poverty: " . . . The generation of the upright shall be blessed. Wealth and riches are in his house. . . . The desire of the wicked shall perish" (Psalm 112:2, 3, 10). But this teaching is not unquestioned; Job contends against any such facile solution of the problem of human suffering; and in the New Testament the facts are too much against the old formula. True, Jesus tells his hearers to seek first the Kingdom of God, and all "these things" shall be given them (Matt. 6:33); but "these things" are food and raiment, not the prosperity of the older teachers. In weighing even the passages which seem to lean farthermost toward a merely utilitarian ethic, we must remember that it is one thing to say that we should be good in order to prosper, and quite another to declare our faith in a moral order where righteousness is the normal way of living. The latter is the faith of the great souls of the Bible: despite appearances or temporary aberrations, they believe that the universe is on the side of the good man.

If the recognition of economic goods seems sometimes to carry Old Testament teachers toward a

stark individualism, the drift is corrected by a sense of social responsibility which is to be found in the prophets, in the Law and in the wisdom literature. It has been suggested that the constant exhortation to almsgiving arises from this sense of mutual obligation. The man who builds a house or digs a pit must guard the unwary from danger, and the oppression of the poor calls forth the biting words of eighth century prophets, so that even to-day we can borrow their language to denounce injustice in our own social order. There was development in this sense of responsibility. The early Hebrew was exhorted to care for his fellow-Hebrew, while the heathen were to look out for themselves. But the Book of Jonah rises to a noble conception of Israel's duty to the world, and the New Testament breaks down the barriers of love. With Jesus human need knows neither Jew nor Samaritan, and in Paul the debt of love is to be paid to Jew and Gentile (Romans 1:14; 13:8). "Every man for himself, and the devil take the hindmost" is a doctrine that has no support in the Bible.

All this is important enough, but he who would learn the word of the Bible for business may well stumble on that which will fill him with dismay. There are times when the prophets seem to strike at the whole economic structure of their times, and one may well doubt whether our modern social order could persist were we to take their teachings seriously. To the great teachers of the Bible, money, property,

business are all subordinate interests, subject always to the will of God; and God's will is for the welfare of man's body and soul.

When ancient Israel sought a place among the great, the rights of individual Hebrews were sacrificed to the glory of the state; but the whole dream of empire was destroyed by a revolution whose leaders were prophets. With a casual word, as if he were commanding him to dispose of a burden, Jesus bade the rich young ruler sell his goods and give the money to the poor. Neither power nor wealth are a feather's worth in the scales against a human life. Life is more than meat and the body than raiment, and there is nothing worth exchanging for life; what good, therefore, if one gain the whole world and lose the one treasure?

Toward such an ideal we may indeed look wistfully, but how hard it is to achieve those know best who have built the great economic empires of our time. Whether these kingdoms of the world will be subordinated to human needs is a question to which only the future can write an answer. If the task be accomplished, it will not be by exhortation but by social engineering; and to promote it religion will have to muster all the resources at her call. Not least among these resources should be the living testimony of the Book, which here standeth sure for all men of good will, that all economic organization must aim at justice and that man's soul must not be in slavery to the things which he possesseth.

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